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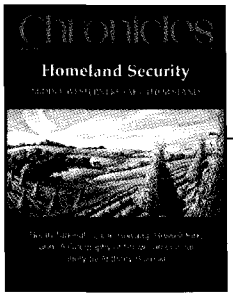

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

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On Calling It a Day

I would like to thank Dr. Thomas Fleming and his staff at *Chronicles* for putting out the best magazine in the United States. I have been a reader for many years and have never been disappointed—until now. In the November 2001 issue, Dr. Fleming's *Foreword* discussed the destruction of our country and announced, "The party is over; it is time to call it a day." I understand his despair, but the last place I want to read about it is in *Chronicles*.

The party may be over, but the real fight is just starting. It may be too late to do anything, but I would not bet on it. I will grant that whatever is coming over the horizon will be ugly, but the game is far from over. I have three children; thus, I have no intention of retreating to a monastery or curling up with a good book while their lives and futures are wrecked. Dr. Fleming suggests that we will "salvage" something from the wreckage of Western civilization. What? Our family silver? An oil painting of Grandpa? I do not mean to be flip, but that is not the attitude we need during these troubled times.

As for Dr. Fleming's remark about wasting your life in a White Power movement, I am not a member of any such group, nor do I intend to join one; still, Dr. Fleming will not find me chuckling at the people (many of them decent folks) who understand what is happening and are desperate to do something—anything. True, I would much prefer a mass organization of alert, educated, determined Americans demanding action in a civilized way, but I don't see that happening right now.

I am a U.S. government employee living in Colombia and a former U.S. Marine officer, and I have seen what happens in a country when it goes over the edge. Contrary to what Dr. Fleming may think, there isn't going to be any slow withering away of America. What we can really expect is a long period of decay and rising political, ethnic, economic, cultural, and social heat, followed by an explosion that will inaugurate a prolonged period of overt, vicious civil conflict. Needless to say, we are well into the first period of decay. Nobody can say what will spark the explosion, but I would guess a lengthy economic downturn, followed by either a major disaster or foreign-policy catastrophe.

Dr. Fleming is right in his assessment of the terrible situation in which we find ourselves, and I agree 100 percent that, to save our people, we must first experience a moral and cultural rebirth. But I am convinced that this will take place in the midst of violent and unprecedented civil strife, predominantly along ethnic lines. Instead of giving a world-weary shrug, we should encourage our people to keep their powder dry. I am not suggesting that we should assemble weekly to crawl through the woods with weapons in our hands. But we need to prepare to take action in an emergency—armed or not—and think about what we can and should do as a people if the storm should break over us.

Perhaps Dr. Fleming is right. Maybe our situation is futile, and we are doomed. But my gut tells me to be ready to fight to defend my family and my people, and I don't mean by writing letters to a newspaper or magazine deploring the sad state we're in. Introspection and intellectual meandering will not save us. Serious thinking about our situation, coupled with organization and, when necessary, resolute action, might save us.

Chronicles has a vital role to play in the process. Please make sure you are where you are needed at this time of crisis.

—*An American in South America*

Dr. Fleming Replies:

I think this is an apples-and-oranges argument. I am asking people to observe reality; my correspondent wants them to prepare for action. The two, while not mutually exclusive, are quite distinct.

I do not see any inclination, by the way, out here in Middle America, to take the situation seriously. Most people continue to send their kids to government schools; most people think abortion is acceptable in some circumstances; most people accept Martin Luther King, Jr., as the patron saint of America. By the time some of them wake up, it will be too late. It is probably too late already. The plain truth is that there is no party, no move-

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ment, no faction, no prominent political leader who will tell the truth about anything, much less outline a program to lead us back to sanity.

So the question is not *whether* American civilization will collapse but *when*—and what are we prepared to do about it. Until we are willing to give up the fiction that we are living in a decadent period of the Roman Empire—say, the reigns of Nero and Caligula—we can never appreciate our situation. The barbarians rule our world just as surely as they ruled Rome during the sixth century.

Up until a few years ago, I thought that Bubba might have a little fight left in him; but Bubba watches the WWF and the Playboy Channel, and his wife is on Prozac.

I don't know what will happen, but I do know something of the way we live now, and the servile and degrading response of Americans to September 11—"Please take away my liberties" and "I promise not to think ill of Arabs"—is a dramatic illustration of how far we have sunk. I am a Christian, so I am very far from being world-weary. I am ready for any creative or productive action, but revolutions are made by communities. Single men and little groups are only terrorists.

On Christian Aliens

Third World immigration, contrary to the claim of Philip Jenkins ("A New Christian America," *Views*, November 2001), is not making America more Christian. The Catholicism of Latin America and the Caribbean (the leading source of immigrants), is often nominal—a veneer covering a wide variety of pre-Columbian superstitions, African spirituality (e.g., Santeria), and simple unbelief. It is not the biblically based faith that historically has characterized the United States. Can anyone honestly claim that America would be more Christian if her values and spirituality were more like those of Mexico, El Salvador, or Haiti?

Even if we accept religious designations at face value, however, it is clear that current immigration is significantly swelling non-Christian faiths. In 1978, there were two million Muslims in the United States; today, there are at least four million, and possibly more. Since 1978, the Hindu population in America has increased from 75,000 to one million, and Buddhists grew from 11,000 to three quarters of a million. Dr. Jenkins says that we should not worry, because these numbers are a relatively small portion of the total population. But their past growth and continuing growth, thanks to mass immigration, will make the United States less Christian than it would have been otherwise.

The increasing Muslim population is particularly problematic, given the historic and present friction between Islam and Western societies. The dynamic strength of Islam can project beyond small numbers. Already, we see public deference to this faith, which few would have foreseen just 15 or 20 years ago.

Anti-Christian multiculturalists, no doubt, are relishing these trends. But many Christians have been too heavenly minded to notice, and some who have noticed have taken refuge in the warm and fuzzy belief that all these newcomers will give the Church new opportunities to make converts. They might reflect instead on the reality that conversion is a two-way street. The ancient Israelites, despite the prophets' warnings, embraced nonbelievers in Israel and eventually embraced their paganism as well. In keeping with this principle, Jesus told his followers to go to all nations, not to invite all nations.

Dr. Jenkins concedes that many "Christian conservatives . . . dislike mass immigration." They do so for good reason.

—John Vinson
Monterey, VA

Dr. Jenkins Replies:

I stand by my argument. Clearly, everything depends on how we define "Christian." Much of what we think of as traditional Christian symbolism and culture (e.g., Gothic architecture, ecclesiastical poetry and music) was, in its day, a form of accommodation to the surrounding society. The Catholic Church of the middle ages—like many of its Protestant successors—had no problem taking on cultural forms so long as the substance of the faith was not compromised. I do not believe that medieval veneration of the Virgin Mary compromised the Christian message any more than do the Marian devotions of modern-day Mexico. (Vodun and Santeria are much tougher cases to argue.) As for the rise of non-Christian religions, they represent a somewhat larger portion of the population than in, say, 1940, but not dramatically so. Meanwhile, the Christian population seems at least as convinced and passionate about its faith as it has for many years. If you ever want to meet a real Christian conservative, find a Ugandan or a Nigerian Ibo.

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HISPANIC VOTERS remain the chief target of GOP strategists, at least in Texas. In the wake of Republican Orlando Sanchez's December 1 runoff loss to Houston's incumbent black mayor, Lee Brown—Sanchez garnered 48 percent of the vote to Brown's 52 percent—news media and Republican *apparatchiki* were busy gushing about the growing electoral weight of "Hispanic" voters and touting the GOP's vaunted "Hispanic strategy." Sanchez's campaign chairman, Jack Rains, could hardly contain himself: Rains claimed that "Orlando" was responsible for the "awakening of the Hispanic community" in Houston and that the "charismatic" Sanchez would remain an "asset" to anyone wanting to "penetrate" the "Hispanic market." Rains pointed to the city's changing demographics (whites now make up just 31.5 percent of the population, with "Hispanic" at 37.4 percent and blacks at about 25 percent, in a city of 1.9 million people) as evidence that Sanchez, whom he described as the "undisputed leader" of the city's "Hispanic movement," could break the Democratic hold on city hall in 2003.

Sanchez—who was endorsed by President Bush, former President Bush, and Rudy Guliani—did garner about 70 percent of the Hispanic vote, and the number of Hispanics voting in the mayor's race was higher than in the recent past. Nevertheless, the number of Hispanics casting ballots remained relatively small. According to the University of Houston's Richard Murray, just over 40,000 of approximately 321,000 votes in the runoff were cast by Hispanics. If Murray is correct, then the Hispanic pro-Sanchez vote represented roughly 28,000 out of about 154,000 votes cast for the former city councilman. Thus, there is room to doubt GOP assertions that Sanchez "awakened"—much less mobilized—Hispanic voters to the degree GOP stalwarts think: The *Wall Street Journal*, for example, claimed that the Sanchez vote proved that Hispanic voters were "starting to leave" the "liberal hacienda."

The real story of the 2001 Houston electoral romp, however, contradicts the GOP's frequent utopian assertions about the nature of racial and ethnic bonds and calls into question its decision to abandon the party's white voting base, which is probably why the party and its propagandists are ignoring it. Though totals for the white and black voting breakdowns in the election are not yet available, it appears that Brown—an incompetent careerist who faced a serious 1999 reelection scare from two "joke" candidates, one of them a wrestling promoter who listed his name on the ballot as "Outlaw Josey Wales IV" (the pair won a surprising 33 percent of the vote)—pulled this one out by playing the race card.

Having won the endorsement of his old boss, Bill Clinton, the former "drug czar" and police chief (who padded his résumé with stints as chief of police in Atlanta, Houston, and New York City) proceeded to piece together the traditional Democratic voting base of blacks, white liberals (especially Houston's politically active and affluent "gay community"), and other minorities, including a significant portion of the city's Hispanics—voters who supposedly belonged lock, stock and barrel to the GOP's Great Hispanic Hope, Sanchez. The strategy was simple: Sanchez was portrayed by Brown as the "white candidate."

As the runoff approached, the Brown campaign enlisted the sister of James Byrd, the black Texan dragged to death by white thugs in 1998, to replay the anti-Bush tactics of the 2000 Gore campaign: The sister blasted Sanchez, then a city-council member, for voting against a council resolution backing "hate crimes" legislation. Brown questioned Sanchez's support for affirmative action, the racial spoils system that has benefited so many "minority contractors" under the two-term mayor's administration. Moreover, Brown's tactics included pointing out to Houston's "Hispanic" (read: "Mexican") population that Sanchez was a Cuban. Just to play it safe, Brown's minions dug up statements from Sanchez, who had earlier worked as a probation officer, calling on city authorities to aid the INS in identifying criminal aliens. Thus, Sanchez was painted as "anti-immigrant" and an ethnic Oreo—Hispanic on the outside, white on the inside.

Brown's nasty campaign served to sway many of Houston's dwindling number of white voters in favor of Sanchez, and—who knows?—maybe the unimpressive GOP front man could have yet saved his political hash if he really *had* made opposition to affirmative action, "hate crimes" laws, and the influx of criminal aliens major points in his campaign. (At this point, we just don't know how many eligible white voters sat this one out.) As it turned out, Sanchez could only bring himself to attack Mayor Brown's fiscal mismanagement and his gutting of the fire department, totally missing the point as to why whites, who are far more likely to vote than Hispanics (especially for a Republican-backed candidate), were attracted to his candidacy in the first place. As Samuel Francis has so often pointed out, the GOP just doesn't get it. Sanchez's strong showing (most analysts expected Brown to win) likely owed more to a partial white mobilization than to an Hispanic "awakening."

Will the GOP learn anything from the Houston race? Probably not. You can bet your burrito that the Republicans, should they decide to run Sanchez again in two years, will encourage Orlando to do even more to show that he is not opposed to anti-white discrimination, that he loves aliens regardless of their criminal records, that he backs "hate crimes" laws, and that he has no intention of barring "minority contractors" from the fiscal trough. In short, without Lee Brown around to do his work for him, Sanchez may encourage Houston's remaining whites to do what so many others have already done: leave town.

—*Wayne Allensworth*

TERRORISM, in our time, has found one of its most consistent sponsors in Pakistan. This fact is so simple it could be taught in fourth-grade geography; only the names are difficult.

In December 1999, in Kashmir, India, an Indian Airlines aircraft was hijacked by several Pakistan-based groups—Harkat-ul-Mujahedin (HUM), Lashkar-e-Toib, and Hizbul Mujahideen—demanding the release of their confederates from Indian prisons. The hijackers called themselves the "united front."

The first group, HUM, was formed in Punjab, Pakistan, in the early 1980s. Undergoing a couple of name changes when it was briefly outlawed, it has stayed on message with kidnappings, hijackings, and ambushes, loosely but adequately described on the unorthodox travel website *www.comebackalive.com*: "HUA is

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the main recruiter and trainer (with help from the Pakistani Secret Service) of young Kashmiris and out-of-work muhajedin [*sic*] from Pakistan. If you are looking for muhajedin [*sic*] time to add to your resume [*sic*], they will train you for five weeks in the dark arts of light weapons, land mines, booby traps and covert operations and then send you marching over the mountains to raise havoc in Indian-occupied Kashmir. The group is also known for sending eager fighters into Bosnia (all gone home now), Tajikistan (Tajik resistance), Myanmar . . . They have become sort of a Burger King jihad around the world."

Only after September 11 was HUM once again officially listed as "terrorist"; the Pakistani secret service (ISI) has not been held accountable. HUM bans U.S. citizens from visiting Kashmir and has participated in several kidnappings of Westerners, including tourists.

HUM funneled U.S. aid to the Taliban in the 1980's, via the Pakistani secret service; the money came from the CIA, which spent $3.3 billion helping the Taliban. HUM is also linked to another Pakistani group, Jamiat-ul-Ulema (JUI), whose leader is openly referred to in print as "the godfather of the Taliban."

The Hizbul is a military force supported by Pakistan, operating inside India with an estimated 15,000 fighters. Lashkar-e-Toib is largely made up of Afghans, not in Afghanistan but in the Kashmir, where they are sent by the ISI to wreak havoc.

HUM, Lashkar-e-Toib, al Badr, and Sipah-e-Sahaba, also Pakistani groups, are all members with Al Qaeda of the "International Islamic Front." According to a *Financial Times* article about rocket attacks on U.S. and U.N. offices in Pakistan in November 1999, "All these Pakistan-based organizations are virulently anti-American in their rhetoric, but only the HUM has been anti-US in its actions too, whereas the other organizations had so far carefully avoided any attacks on US nationals or interests."

Pakistan hosts the Saudi Arabian-sponsored Wahhabi religious schools that teach the hardest-line Islam to children with nowhere else to go. These schools are where some of the Talibs began.

Pakistan's secret service has been deliberately destabilizing Afghanistan for years. The late Ahmed Shah Massoud, commander of the "united front" in Afghanistan, attributed the Taliban's success to the ISI (which also trained Massoud); even anti-Taliban, pro-U.S. Arab writers consider the Taliban a puppet of Pakistan. Massoud—who might have united enough factions to form some sort of government—was attacked by suicide bombers posing as journalists on September 9, 2001, and died on September 14.

Massoud's "journalist" assassins enjoyed a remarkably smooth trip, amounting to a safe conduct, through Afghan territory. Thus, their trip was visible—or should have been—to the Pakistani secret service and to the U.S. and Russian secret services. Either way, Massoud's assassination looks like a chip for Vladimir Putin, newly induced to join a "coalition" against the Taliban—which, according to the Russian press, several former Soviet countries had already formed months earlier. (The Soviet Union failed in several attempts to assassinate Massoud when Putin was with the KGB.) Somehow, two former heroes of the Afghan war against the Soviet Union have now been assassinated, despite the CIA's vigilance; the only opposition figure successfully rescued by the CIA is one who was based out of Pakistan.

Pakistan has supported, trained, financed, and shipped commandos against other states for years, and the entire Middle East knows it. When the White House has bombs dropped on the Taliban, while giving money and photo ops to a smiling General Musharraf, it broadcasts the speciousness of the ISI, the CIA, and U.S. intelligence around the world.

—*Margie Burns*

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT's freestyle interpretive gymnastics did not end when the man who was uncertain regarding the meaning of "is" left office. On January 13, 2000, President Clinton appointed Victoria Wilson to fill a vacancy on the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, a roving band of allegedly independent and bipartisan officials tasked with the job of determining the state of civil rights in the nation. Wilson was to fill the rest of the term of A. Leon Higginbotham, Jr., a retired activist judge who had recently died. As was the custom, the President expressly limited Wilson's tenure to the remaining years left in the six-year term of Mr. Higginbotham, so her appointment should have expired on November 29, 2001. Accordingly, on December 5, President George W. Bush appointed a new commissioner, Peter N. Kirsanow, to take the place of Victoria Wilson. Four of the eight commissioners are appointed by the President, while the other four are appointed by Congress. By statute, each of the commissioners is to serve a six-year term, and that is the problem.

When Kirsanow arrived at the commission's first regularly scheduled meeting after his appointment, on December 7, and sought to present his credentials and take his seat, the chair of the commission, Mary Frances Berry (nominally an "independent") ruled that he could not be recognized because the commission did not allow participation by "members of the audience." This was Kirsanow's status, in her opinion, because (according to Berry, Wilson, and three of their fellow commissioners) there was no vacancy on the commission. In their view, Wilson was entitled to serve a full six-year term from the date she was appointed. Accordingly, Wilson refused to give up her seat until 2006. Another of the Wilson-friendly commissioners, Christopher Edley, a Harvard law professor, argued that, whatever her commission had said, the governing statute provided for six-year terms, and that was that. The White House, he continued, was simply showing "an impulse to ignore the law for political purposes."

Washingtonians were aghast at the seemingly illegal actions of Mary Frances Berry, Christopher Edley, Virginia Wilson, and the other two recalcitrants, and stern denunciations were issued from oped pages and assorted Republican pulpits. In the dark of night (literally) on December 7, the Bush administration filed a pleading demanding that a court order the commission to seat Kirsanow. At first blush, the Bush administration seemed to have the better argument, since the six-year terms for commissioners had been set up so that there would be rotation in office, and this rotation would be effectively maintained by limiting Virginia Wilson to the term provided in her appointment. But under the current statute governing the commission, passed in 1994, Berry, Edley, Wilson, and their colleagues have an interesting point. The previous statute, passed in 1983, expressly stated that interim appointments extended only for the term of the replaced commissioner, as Wilson's appointment had. But the 1994 statute omitted that provision, providing simply for six-year terms. The United States Code Annotated, which is an authoritative source for these matters, carries no explanation for the omission, but Democratic Congressmen John Conyers, Jr.,

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and Jerrold Nadler were quick to claim that the omission was deliberate, and thus each appointee is guaranteed a full six-year term.

If, by its own terms, it violates the statute, is Virginia Wilson's appointment void from inception, in which case a court should remove her? Or should the commission simply carry out the clear statutory directive and let her have her remaining time in office? Should the statutory scheme of staggered terms trump the clear words of the statute?

The issue is important, because the Civil Rights Commission had racked up quite a record of criticizing Republicans (especially during the presidential election in Florida), and most of the "independents" seem to be perpetually allied with the Democrats against the three Republican-leaning appointees. If President Bush succeeded in placing Kirsanow on the commission, Mary Frances Berry would no longer have her five-to-three majority, thus ending her ability to embarrass the administration. A court decision, however, might not matter since another seat is set to open on the commission, one currently held by one of the anti-Berry commissioners, an "independent" allied with the Republicans and a congressional appointee. In past years, when such a commissioner allied with a particular party left the commission, the Senate leader of the commissioner's party was accorded the privilege of dictating who would fill the vacancy, in order to fulfill the statutory scheme of bipartisanship. But the statute expressly provides that the vacancy be filled by the president *pro tem* of the Senate, which means that the actual power to appoint is in the hands of the majority leader. It had been the custom, when the majority leader was not of the same party as the retiring commissioner, for the majority leader to follow the choice of the minority leader. As this issue of *Chronicles* goes to press, however, Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle is hinting that, since the statute effectively gives him the power to fill any vacancies in any manner he chooses, he will simply appoint a Democrat (or an "independent" allied with the Democrats) if the court seats Kirsanow. And thus, in pure Clintonian fashion, the letter of the law may be used once again to defeat its purpose.

—*Stephen B. Presser*

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Our poet this month is **William Baer.** His first collection of poetry, *The Unfortunates* (New Odyssey) received the 1997 T.S. Eliot Poetry Prize, and his work has been published in *Poetry*, the *New Criterion*, the *Kenyon Review*, *Ploughshares*, the *Southern Review*, the *Hudson Review*, and other periodicals.

Gregory L. Newbold, our cover artist this month, hails from Salt Lake City, Utah. This illustration was originally published in the book *Winter Lullaby*, by Barbara Seuling (Harcourt). He has illustrated two children's books, and his paintings appear on every jar of Mountain Sun Natural Juices. His work has been recognized by the Society of Illustrators and the American Institute of Graphic Arts, among others. To see more of Mr. Newbold's books and artwork, visit *www.gregnewbold.com*.

Photographs for Sean Scallon's "Non-Partisanship" (*Vital Signs*, p. 43) are provided by **John Kézdy**. Mr. Kézdy, the assistant attorney general for the state of Illinois, is an amateur photographer and a longtime *Chronicles* subscriber. He lives near Chicago and rides circuit around the state for the attorney general's office.

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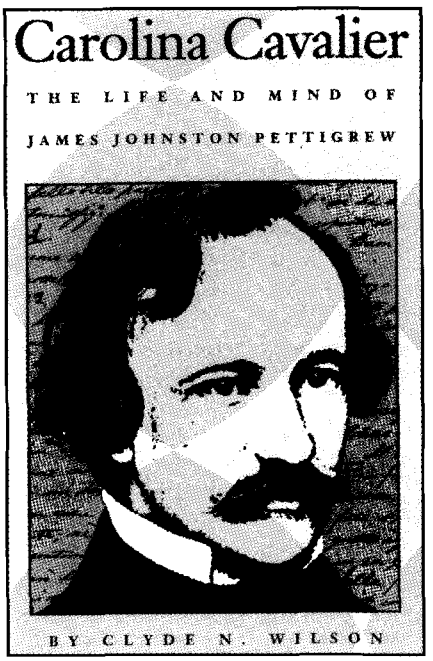

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by Thomas Fleming

The Decline and Fall of the Midwest

Even more than Vachel Lindsay, who liked to say that the Mason-Dixon line ran straight through his heart, Booth Tarkington embodied the regional conflict that defined the Midwest. Born in Indianapolis only five years after the end of the war between the regions, Newton Booth Tarkington was descended on his father's side from Southern Democrats (from North Carolina by way of Tennessee), but his mother, Elizabeth Booth, had impeccable Yankee credentials (her grim ancestry stretched back to the Puritan Thomas Hooker, who founded Connecticut). The melding of the two races produced a Unionist Republican family with a devotion to hard work that was tempered by the graciousness and open-mindedness of the Old South.

After leaving Princeton without graduating, Tarkington soon became a successful writer and a professional drinker. By 1911, at the age of 42, his marriage had failed, and he was on the verge of becoming a literary has-been and a more-or-less confirmed alcoholic. The hard living caught up with him, and he suffered a fairly serious heart attack at the beginning of 1912. He decided that he preferred to die sober. As he said later, he did not so much decide to quit drinking as decide that he had quit already.

The results of good health and a new marriage were impressive: the series of Penrod stories; *The Turmoil*, written in just 60 days in early 1914; *Seventeen*, serialized in early 1915; and, in 1917, his masterpiece, *The Magnificent Ambersons*—not a bad four years for an invalid, has-been, and recovering drunk. The sequence of major books is rounded out by *Alice Adams* (1921), *The Midlander* (1924), *The Plutocrat* (1926)—to say nothing of his short stories, other novels, and Broadway hits. By the 1920's, Tarkington was America's consistently best-selling author, and he topped the lists of literary polls for the most important American writer.

Part of his success lies in the simple fact that Tarkington was a very good writer who worked quickly. F. Scott Fitzgerald regarded him as perhaps the most talented American novelist, but the gentleman from Indiana was also lucky enough to observe the transformation of the Midwest from a quintessentially American region of farms and quiet towns into a maelstrom of industrial cities swarming with immigrant workers.

Tarkington, as a gentleman of the old school, affable and well mannered, was saddened by the vulgarization of the America he loved; he refused, however, to cry over spilt milk. Straddling two worlds and with a novelist's ability to enjoy life even when it came in unfamiliar or unpleasant forms, he was uniquely able to comment on the transformation of America that took place between the end of the Civil War and the start of World War II.

The Magnificent Ambersons traces the fall from glory of Indianapolis's finest family and of old Major Amberson's spoiled heir, young Georgie Minafer. To Georgie, anyone outside the tiny, charmed circle of the best families is simply "riffraff"—his favorite word. He first enters the scene when, after brawling with a strange boy and bidding the Methodist minister to go to hell, he justifies his conduct by telling his mother,

> Grandpa wouldn't wipe his shoe on that ole story-teller . . . I mean none of the Ambersons wouldn't have anything to do with him . . . I bet if he wanted to see any of 'em, he'd haf to go around to the side door . . . He's just riffraff.

The Amberson's world is teetering on the edge of the precipice, though no one knows it except Eugene Morgan. Morgan had failed to win the hand of Georgie's mother, and he has come back to revolutionize the city by building an automobile factory. Morgan's respectable family antecedents cannot alter the fact that he is the economic revolutionary who is destroying the graceful old order.

Georgie, on the other hand, despite his courage and charm, is simply a waste of a human being who thinks only of his own social position. He is oblivious to the feelings of others—to their very existence. George despises the idea of useful work: "I don't expect to go into any business or profession," he tells Morgan's charming daughter Lucy. "Lawyers, bankers, politicians! What do they get out of life, I'd like to know! What do they ever know about real things? Where do they ever get." What does he want to be? asks Lucy. He replies, "A Yachtsman."

The Ambersons' fall is rapid and terrible. Walking through the streets after the bankruptcy sale, George confronts a changed world in which his family counts for nothing. Because he had always traveled in a closed carriage, he had never noticed the transformation—but now he sees:

> The streets were thunderous; a vast energy heaved under the universal coating of dinginess. George walked through the begrimed crowds of hurrying strangers and saw no face that he remembered. Great numbers of the faces were even of a kind he did not remember ever to have seen . . . He saw German eyes with American wrinkles at their corners; he saw Irish eyes and Neapolitan eyes, Roman eyes, Tuscan eyes, eyes of Lombardy, of Savoy, Hungarian eyes, Balkan eyes, Scandinavian eyes—all with a queer American look in them . . .

He sees familiar landmarks turned into shops and cheap stores. George is a fine-looking young man and attracts the attention of not a few women. One group of *nouveaux riches* kids, gaudily dressed, drives by in a red sports car, and while the girls admire George, wondering who he might be, one of the boys says he knows: "He thinks he's the Grand Duke Cuthbert." The girls giggle, and "George unconsciously put his emotion into a muttered word: 'Riffraff.'"

Ultimately, George hits rock bottom when, chancing upon a book listing the city's top 500 families, there are no Ambersons on the list.

> Georgie Minafer had got his comeuppance, but the people who had so longed for it were not there to see it, and they never knew it. Those who were still living had for-

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gotten all about it and all about him.

The chronicles of Indianapolis are continued in a novel that lacks some of the *Ambersons*' magnificence, but makes up for it by the pathos of the story.

> There is a midland city in the heart of fair, open country, a dirty and wonderful city nesting dingily in the fog of its own smoke. The stranger must feel the dirt before he feels the wonder . . . he may care for no further proof that wealth is here better loved than cleanliness. . . . The smoke is like the bad breath of a giant panting for more and more riches. He gets them and pants the fiercer, smelling and swelling prodigiously. He has a voice, a hoarse voice, hot and rapacious trained to one tune: "Wealth! I will get wealth. I will make wealth. I will sell wealth for more wealth. My house shall be dirty, my garments shall be dirty, and I will foul my neighbor so that he cannot be clean . . . but I will get wealth.

So begins *The Turmoil*. The smoke that invaded Indianapolis in *The Magnificent Ambersons* is now almost a primary character of Tarkington's next two novels. The cult of bigness and progress is exemplified in the person of old Sheridan, who is referred to repeatedly in Tarkington's novels as the exemplar of the new industrialist. The "turmoil" is not merely the birth pangs of the new industrial Indianapolis; it is the social turmoil of two families—the Sheridans, who have reached the pinnacle of success without acquiring respectability or dignity, and the Vertrees, a respectable and dignified family who are facing economic ruin. In such a novel, there must be a courtship between the two families, and there is—or rather *are*, since Mary Vertrees first sets her sights on Jim Sheridan, Jr., a chip off the old industrialist's engine block; in the course of the novel, however, she comes to love the frail and aesthetic youngest son Dibbs, who has spent the eight months previous to the novel's beginning in a sanitarium, trying to recover his health, which was broken almost completely by working in the factory's machine shop.

Mary is a practical, levelheaded girl who has never been able to fall in love with any of the young men who have pursued her. In one sense, she is a modern, liberated girl, cynical about false values and capable of thinking for herself (which distinguishes her sharply from her conventional and platitudinous parents, who think their Landseer hunting prints are the pinnacle of fine art), but as much as her mother, she is a virtuous lady. She is experienced enough to recognize both the pretensions of the *nouveaux riches* and the viciousness of the decaying aristocracy. After her first party at the Sheridans, Mary tells her mother that young Edith Sheridan is interested in a young aristocrat, who is after both Edith and her brother's wife: "He's a bad lot, that Lamhorn boy; everybody's always known that, but the Sheridans don't know the everybodies that know."

Dibbs Sheridan is one of Tarkington's best characters, defying all stereotypes. Yes, he is educated and refined beyond the understanding or appreciation of his family; nonetheless he loves his family, though they appear to care very little for him. He should be the melancholy scion of ancient aristocracy, and young Lamhorn, the cynical child of an industrialist—just as frank and virtuous Mary should be the child of decent country folk or the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie. In fact, they are both natural aristocrats in a world that is alternating between vulgarity and degeneracy.

The degenerate young Lamhorn is at the center of the problem. Coming from a world that Edith Sheridan and her sister-in-law Sibyl have only glimpsed, like the child putting its nose to the window of the toy store, he has fascinated the two women. Taking advantage of Sibyl—who has all the moral restraint of a cat in heat—he really wants to get his hands on Edith and the Sheridan money. Quite apart from the moral dilemmas that the plot suggests is the question of class. The old class may have degenerated into pathetically dignified people such as Mary's parents and the decadent Bobby Lamhorn; the new class, however (as exemplified by the Sheridans), is vulgar, coldhearted toward the ailing Dibbs, far more snobbish than the Ambersons, and completely spoiled.

In the end, of course, it is the poet Dibbs who saves the family. However, the young man is a very unpromising future captain of industry. When Dibbs is asked by his despairing father what he wants to do in life, he tells him that he wants to write poetry and essays. The old man responds with bitter contempt that that is work for girls, not men, and points to the pulsating life in the streets: "Look out of that window! Look at the life and energy down there! I should think any young man's blood would tingle to get into it and be part of it."

When the oldest son dies, Dibbs agrees to go back to the machine shop, where he does so well that his father wants to promote him to an executive position. Old Sheridan is particularly eager to bring his youngest son along once he realizes that his son Roscoe, unable to control his evil wife, has crawled into the bottle. Dibbs, however, is obstinate; he has made his piece with the zinc-cutter, but he does not want to be responsible for spreading the ugliness of industrialism. He relents only when it appears that he might be able to help Mary and her family. Even his father comes to realize that Dibbs will, in fact, kill himself with work if he does not have something higher than growth and profits to dedicate himself to. Mary, of course, is that ideal.

The problem with *The Turmoil* is the ending. It is all very well to fall in love with a beautiful and pure woman, but as the ideal end of human existence, married love falls short. Dibbs gives up poetry for business, but how will marriage become the be-all and end-all of his existence? Despite the happy ending, Dibbs is actually a human sacrifice made to the god of noise and smoke.

The Midlander rounds out Tarkington's trilogy. Dan Oliphaunt comes from a decent old family on National Avenue, with a very rich grandmother but with a father who is too decent to know how to make money. Dan is not an especially good student, but he squeaks by. What he really loves is making things out of junk and starting little businesses. The key episode of his childhood concerns one such small business—making brackets with his friend Sammy. When Dan's brother Harlan—something of a pantywaist—tells him to come in and send the dirty Jew home, Dan is furious, and a fistfight nearly breaks out at the dinner table. The brothers never become enemies, but they cannot be friends, either.

The boys go to an Ivy League college and, after graduation, spend too much time in New York, where Dan courts and marries a spoiled socialite who ends up destroying his life; on a trip back home, however, he conceives of the project of spending his entire inheritance on a distant farm and turning it into a subdivi-

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sion—expecting the city to grow out that far. Dan is a visionary, but none of his father's friends will help him. Jumping from near-bankruptcy to near-bankruptcy, however, he turns out to have been right. People are tired of the smoke and noise from all that growth, and they are ready to flee to the new suburb. Dan becomes a great man, with his finger in every new business, until he is caught in a squeeze and the old guard brings him down. Only his Jewish friend stands by him.

Harlan is appalled but learns, in the end, to respect the brother whom everyone else loves, even those who think that he is crazy. As National Avenue is turned into a commercial street lined with car dealers and garages, Harlan sees nothing but the destruction of his own world. When he marries Dan's childhood sweetheart, he still cannot understand why his own mother and wife now insist on living in the restricted part of Dan's subdivision, which is a sort of garden estate—"more beautiful," his mother sighs, than National Avenue ever was.

Tarkington took up the theme of progress in his best work of nonfiction, *The World Does Move*, in which he moves back and forth between nostalgic reminiscences about the good old days and a practical insistence that, as the world changes, we must change with it. Writing in 1929 and looking back to the turn of the century, he frankly acknowledges that, "of the pleasant smallish city I lived in . . . there remains about as much as the Roman left of Punic Carthage when he drove his ploughs over its site before building his own city there."

Unlike Theodore Dreiser or Sinclair Lewis, Booth Tarkington could live on comfortable terms in Europe without showing off or developing contempt for the folks back home. He knows Babbitt all too well—knows how cheap and vulgar he is—but he cannot despise him. In *The Plutocrat*, Earl Tinker—the Midwestern booster *par excellence*—ends up taking his place beside the Roman as one of the creators of civilization. In his more prosaic essay, Tarkington describes this new species of American businessman:

> They are optimists to the point of belligerence, and on their marching banner they inscribe the words, "Boost! Don't Knock!" They are boosters out to sell their city to the world. They believe that boosting pays and their boosting advertisements are of a new phrasing believed to be both vigorous and seductive. . . . The idealists constantly shout that their city shall be a better city and what they principally mean by better is bigger and more prosperous. They seem to have one supreme theory: that the perfect happiness and beauty of cities and of human life are to be brought about by more factories. . . . As the city grows and grows, it grows dirtier and dirtier. The idealists are putting up enormous business buildings that are repulsively begrimed before they are finished, but the idealists cannot see the dirt for the size, and boast grandly. They boast of their monuments and rain soot on them. Every year they boost a great Clean-Up Week when everybody is supposed to get rid of the empty cans in his backyard . . .

The gentleman from Indiana is appalled by most of the new art and the new morals, but he is at a loss to know how to combat them, even in principle, so he convinces himself that fast young girls in short skirts swilling cocktails are simply a new fashion (and a bracing one), that women are no longer willing to be subservient. A Christian would know how to interpret these developments and how to oppose them without giving way to despair, but the Midwest had ceased to be Christian sometime between the Civil War and World War I. Midwesterners went to church and sent their kids to Sunday school, but there was none like the Midlander's puritanical grandmother to keep them in line. Dan Oliphaunt was forced to go to Sunday school, but he cannot impose the same duty on his own son, who is spoiled to incorrigibility by his New York mother. Mary Vertrees does go to church, but mostly to hear the organ, and when she takes Dibbs with her, he says that to sit beside her is to go to church. This displacement of love of God by love of a woman is a sacrilege.

People like Isabel Amberson Minafer and Mary Vertrees have disappeared from America, replaced not by bold piratical industrialists like Sheridan, Morgan, and Earl Tinker, but by spoiled grandchildren who go to Harvard and Cornell and affect an Eastern accent without getting so much as their fingernails into American civilization: consumerists and hedonists who go through three or four divorces and watch their children grow up wearing jeans and listening to Michael Jackson and Ice Cube. This aristocracy sets the tone for the vast middle class who, as one more recent Indiana poet put it, "Work all day in some high rise / And vacation down on the Gulf of Mexico."

The failure of American fiction and the failure of the Midwest itself is that, in the pursuit of success, we turned away not just from religion but from God. A pagan worshipping the false gods of his land could love the little spot on which he grew up. A post-Christian can only see the chance to turn the family farm into a development. It is not Christ who taught us that bigger is always better, that power and wealth, growth and profits, are the only good things worthy of a serious man's attention. It was someone else who has whispered to us that we ought to transcend our limitations and become as gods. The result has been—in Indianapolis as in Rockford—that we are making our little worlds unfit for human life.

We cannot blame Booth Tarkington for being American or Midwestern. Even against his better judgment and settled opinion, he showed us the standards of decency and civility, of lives lived with joy as well as dignity. In teaching us to mourn the passing of the old order, he inspires us to do better with the time we have in the world that we inherited from the Morgans and Sheridans. c

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Indian as Ecologist

Most of us learned in grammar school, if not before, that the American Indian had a special reverence for nature. He was a kind of proto-ecologist who conserved natural resources, be they trees or beasts, with a religious devotion. I cannot recall the number of times I heard someone repeat, mantra-like, that "The Indian used every part of the buffalo." Teachers said it. Students said it. An aunt of mine said it. Before I could begin saying it, my older brother introduced me to books about mountain men. Along with the Hardy Boys, those were the books—because they launched me on great adventures—that got me to read. What could be better than to ascend the Missouri and, clad in buckskin and carrying a Hawken rifle, trap the beaver streams of the West with Tom Fitzpatrick, Jed Smith, and Joe Walker?

I went on a hundred such expeditions and got to know dozens of mountain men. I also got to know the Indians who lived across the wide Missouri. Some were allies of the mountain men. Others were enemies. Friend or foe, none of them was any kind of ecologist, particularly when it came to the buffalo. This was abundantly clear in the letters, diaries, and memoirs of the mountain men and of fur-company employees. It was also abundantly clear in manuscript material left behind by government explorers, missionaries, soldiers, and foreign travelers. That the buffalo was killed with reckless abandon by the Indian and that he left most of the ill-fated beast to rot on the prairie has generally been omitted from the classroom and from textbooks, despite the great quantity and quality of firsthand accounts.

While teaching the American West at UCLA, I never failed to surprise most of my students, and leave some in shock, when I described Indian buffalo hunting. Nearly all the students had been indoctrinated into believing the Indian-as-ecologist myth. The myth had been used as a powerful tool in the conservation movement since the turn of the century and, by the 1960's, had also become useful for the evil-white-man versus noble-red-man theme. There is, admittedly, an element of truth in the myth. In times of scarcity—when facing starvation—the Indian did make use of every part of the buffalo. However, until the middle of the 19th century, such times were atypical. Normally, the Indian, like all other men, was profligate. If he had not been, he would have been something other than human.

The Plains Indian killed the buffalo with relative ease after he obtained horses from Europeans. If the terrain was suitable, the Indian stampeded buffalo off cliffs, killing or crippling hundreds at a time. At cliff bottoms, bones and debris accumulated year after year, until cliffs of 70 feet or more were halved in height. The sites became known as "buffalo jumps" or "buffalo kills"; they could be called the original landfills. The Indian left bulls to rot. Unless faced with no other choice, the Indian considered the hides of the bull too inflexible and the meat too tough to bother with. The choicer parts of the cows—the tongue, the hump, and the meat of the shoulder and ribs—were cut away for eating. The greater part of the carcass was left to rot. In 1804, Meriwether Lewis noted

> the remains of a vast many mangled carcasses of Buffalow [*sic*] which had been driven over a precipice of 120 feet by the Indians and perished; the water appeared to have washed away a part of this immence [*sic*] pile of slaughter and still there remained the fragments of at least a hundred carcasses.

The Indian also stampeded buffalo into rivers and drowned them by the hundreds. In the 1670's, French Jesuit Louis Hennepin described how Indians drove whole herds of buffalo into rivers to kill them and then took "only the Tongues, and some other of the best Pieces." Fur trader John McDonnell counted more than 7,000 buffalo drowned in one day in 1795 in the Qu'Appelle River. Another fur trader, Charles McKenzie, noted that the Mandan, who lived along the upper Missouri, were fond of driving "large herds" of buffalo onto thin sections of ice covering the river during the winter. The heavy beasts broke through the ice, drowned, and were fished out downstream. Hundreds went unrecovered and washed up on distant riverbanks to rot.

Driving buffalo into a natural or man-made corral for slaughter, a procedure called "impounding," was another popular form of Indian hunting. Hundreds were slaughtered in the "pounds" and, again, the waste was enormous. In 1805, Meriwether Lewis described the Mandan killing "whole droves" of buffalo and taking only "the best parts of the meat." Four years later, fur trader Alexander Henry noted that, in a Blackfeet pound, the "bulls were mostly entire," with "none but the good cows having been cut up." As late as the 1840's, such profligacy remained typical. Artist Paul Kane wrote that the Indians

> destroy innumerable buffalo, apparently for the mere pleasure of the thing. I have myself seen a pound so filled with dead carcasses that I could scarcely imagine how the enclosure could have contained them while living. . . . Only one in twenty is used in any way by the Indians . . . thousands are left to rot where they fall.

By the time the white man had begun hunting the buffalo in earnest, the Indian had already reduced the number of buffalo by millions and had put the beast on the path to extinction. A poster of Iron Eyes Cody—with a tear trickling down his cheek—became an obligatory wall decoration for ecologists during the 1970's. The poster remains iconic, which is ironic on two counts: The Indian was not a conservationist; and Iron Eyes Cody was not an Indian—he was an Italian whose real name was Oscar DeCorti.

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Nordic Conquests

"The Song of Life's Dismay"

by Aaron D. Wolf

THE FIGHT IN THE STREETS OF NORTHFIELD BETWEEN THE ROBBERS AND CITIZENS.

John Jay Lemon, courtesy of the Minnesota Historical Society

In Northfield, Minnesota, St. Olaf's College was celebrating the 17th of May—the day the sons of Norway wrote their constitution in 1814, declaring self-government and independence from Swedish rule. It was 1907, just two years after the Swedes had released Norway and Prince Carl had become Haakon VII. Thirty-one-year-old first-year instructor Ole Rölvaag gave the address, which took on surprisingly somber tones:

> When the ship carrying our parents westward into the unknown, pointed its bow toward the evening sun; when those on board saw the rugged gray mountains of Norway sink beneath the horizon; when the golden sun-rays played for the last time on snow-capped peaks—then sank not only a shoreline from view but also their country—as their country, Norway no longer existed.

Ole Edvart Rölvaag had left his fatherland in late July 1896. He did so not because of economic hardship, as so many farmers from the hinterlands of Norway, who longed for the vast, untamed, Midwestern prairies, had done. The Rölvaag family had successfully fished the Lofoten waters for generations, and when Ole was 20 years old, the skipper of the fishing boat on which he had sailed for six winters offered to buy him his own vessel. Nor did he leave for religious reasons. While pietist Lutherans fled the dusty orthodoxy of the established Lutheran Church of Norway, Rölvaag had devoured the Bible as a child and been confirmed as an orthodox Lutheran. He was comfortable with the traditions of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

Ole Rölvaag said that he felt compelled by a sense of destiny to go to America, despite his deep love for his native land and his family. He was a boy who loved books—though his father had called him "the Turk" and said that schooling him was a waste of time, money, and effort, since he so often fell asleep in class. Ole's inner world was formed by the darkly exotic landscape of Rölvaag—the imposing mountain peaks known as the Seven Sisters and the glacier across the harbor—viewed through the lens of the Norwegian fiction he borrowed from state-sponsored libraries. America, in his mind, was a mystical place, as described for young Ole by James Fenimore Cooper, in translation.

His longing for America was also shaped by stern reality. He disliked the harsh winters on the Lofoten waters, where men were nourished for months on end only by salt-cod and potatoes. At that latitude, the winters were bathed in darkness, and Ole's imagination, nurtured by the sagas of the wandering Israelites and imbued with Norse mythology, was filled with melancholy. During the winter lay-up of 1893, a violent storm assaulted the fleet of fishing boats from Rölvaag, drowning in the icy, arctic waters many of the men Ole had known since childhood. When he safely returned home, devastated, he wrote his Uncle Jakob Fredrik, an immigrant farmer living in South Dakota, begging for a ticket to America.

Three years later, his beautiful and tragic journey began: a Nordic conquest in its own right that ultimately won understanding for generations of immigrants (Norwegian and other) faced with the stark reality that, though their fathers had conquered an untamed prairie, cutting sod for huts with their bare hands, they, too, had been conquered—by America. Yes, there was much to gain in America: Farmland was becoming scarce in southern Norway, and land in the Midwest was plentiful. But the loss was profound, and those who did not remain blissfully ignorant of their own heritage were condemned to Samson's fate: eyes poked out, circling the salt mill and wondering what had happened to his great strength. By the time Rölvaag gave that 17th of May speech in 1907, he spoke with a new, more profound melancholy about his brother immigrants who

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gave, in the bargain, a fatherland and received, as their part, a new country. Much, infinitely much, was lost in this exchange. The intimate spiritual communion between the individual and his people came to an end. The heritage which our Norse forefathers committed into our keeping and urged us to increase, we in too great a measure lost. And every new generation of Norwegian Americans will lose more and more.

Back in 1896, Rölvaag had arrived in New York City, where he felt like "a fly in a securely corked bottle"; he had then boarded an iron horse bound for South Dakota. He did not know a lick of English, had (literally) only a dime in his pocket, and his uncle failed to show up when the train arrived. Unable to communicate, he wandered down the railway into the night, forlorn. Finally, he ran into a fellow Norske, who took him to his uncle's farm, but only after, as he said in a letter, "I saw my first sunset on the prairie, and shall never forget it."

He recalled that feeling of separation in his 1907 speech:

> If a man is to realize in full measure the potentialities of his being, he must first of all learn to know the people of his own kin. He must discover the peculiar situation and the special talents of his own race [for Rölvaag, "race" means the Norwegian race]. He must also know its weaknesses. It is fundamentally true that we are projections of those who went before us. And how is he to make contact with his own kin and with his past, if he is not able to do it through language? Through its language he learns to know his own people's history and literature. This knowledge is of supreme importance to our cultural development. It constitutes our cultural roots. Without it, we become drifting vagrants, scrubs or tramps, culturally speaking . . . We are Americans, but our people have not been in this country from the beginning. We cannot truthfully sing, "Land where my fathers died." For good or for bad, this is the truth.

Though Norwegian immigrants had trickled into the American colonies a few at a time, it had not been until 1824 that a party of 53 (mostly Norwegian Quakers from Stavanger) had come, led by Cleng Peerson, who had purchased land near Rochester, New York. They named their place the Kendall Settlement, which became a stopping-off point for many Norwegians on their way to the Midwest. From 1826 until 1910, Norway gave to America a larger proportion of her people than any other nation except Ireland. In 1834, six families moved from the Kendall Settlement to the Fox River Valley in Northern Illinois, beginning the second permanent Norwegian settlement in America.

In two years' time, most of the members of the Kendall Settlement had migrated to the Fox River Settlement, and a few had moved to Chicago. From the Fox River, many dispersed around the Midwest: some to Shelbyville, Missouri; some to Noble County, Indiana; some to the Beaver Creek Settlement south of Fox Valley. On July 1, 1836, Ole Nattestad went north to Rock County, Wisconsin, were he founded the Jefferson Prairie Settlement. By August, two of his companions, Gullick Gravdal and Gisle Hallan, had founded another settlement in Rock County, just west of Beloit. Over the next decade, Norwegian immigrants poured into the Midwest, into such places as Muskego Lake, Wisconsin; the Sugar Creek colony in northeastern Iowa; Stephenson County, Illinois, and the western end of Winnebago County, Illinois.

The most significant new settlement of those early years was founded in September 1840 near the confluence of Dane, Jefferson, and Rock Counties in southern Wisconsin on the banks of Lake Koshkonong. Kaskeland, as the Viking settlers called it, soon became the new destination for Norwegian immigrants journeying to the Midwest.

When Ole Rölvaag arrived at Elk Point, South Dakota, in 1896, he thought he would work as a hired hand until he could secure a farm of his own. After three years of breaking his back, his plans changed. The work might not have seemed so impossible had he not been surrounded by young men and women who appeared to detest everything he loved: the books, the songs, and the memories of the fatherland. They were, he determined, infected with Yankee Puritanism—they did not dance or even smile. And none of them was clamoring for a library. "The only fiction [in Norwegian] I have come across here," he lamented in a letter, "is *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, *On Skis Across Greenland*, and *The Life of Gjest Baardsen*." Rölvaag called this time his "Babylonian captivity."

Entering a college-preparatory school (Augustana at Canton, South Dakota) he polished his English and quickly shed any resemblance to a "Turk." After a year, he was accepted at St. Olaf's in Minnesota, where he studied Norwegian literature and began writing his first novel, *Nils and Astri*. By 1905, he had earned his bachelor's degree and was engaged to the daughter of an immigrant farmer from South Dakota. He spent the next year across the Atlantic in Oslo, studying Norwegian history and fiction—particularly folklore and Ibsen. Spending the summer in Rölvaag (as so many Norwegian immigrants had done, Ole had taken the name of his hometown as his surname) with his family, he wrote, "The greatest blessing on earth is a home, and the greatest within the home is Mother." Still, he knew he must return to his fiancée and St. Olaf's, where he had been appointed assistant professor in the department of Norwegian. By that spring, his popularity on campus had grown so much that he was asked to deliver the 17th of May address.

Destiny called in 1923 when a famous Norwegian author, Johan Bojer, announced plans to come to America to research a novel on the Norwegian pioneer experience in the Midwest. Requesting a year's sabbatical from St. Olaf's, Rölvaag explained to the school's president that he believed only he could write this novel. By Thanksgiving 1924, he had finished the first half, the story of Per Hansa and Beret Holm and their courageous trek to South Dakota, called "In Those Days"; by the next spring, he had completed the second half, "Founding the Kingdom," detailing the establishment of the fictional Spring Creek community. The two halves were bound together for publication in Norway and America under the title *Giants in the Earth*. Both editions sold phenomenally well, and the 49-year-old Rölvaag was vaulted to celebrity status—especially in Norway. In 1929, he continued the story of Per and Beret's son in *Peder Victorious*; and, in 1931, the year of his death, the final installment, *Their Fathers' God*, appeared. Taken together, they provide some of the most profound literary insights into the ethnic, racial, cultural, and religious problems facing Americans—then and now.

Rölvaag had perfected an Ibsenian style, focusing on character development rather than plot. Indeed, a plot summary of *Giants in the Earth* would evoke a yawn from modern readers: Per Hansa and Beret Holm move to the prairie; they make a

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home and interact with neighbors in the Spring Creek community; some Indians stop by; Beret has a baby, then goes crazy; the neighbor, Hans Olsa, gets sick; Per Hansa freezes to death in the end. The next two novels seem even more uneventful: In *Peder Victorious*, Peder goes to public school with the Irish and grows to resent being Norwegian. In *Their Fathers' God*, the Lutheran Peder marries an Irish Catholic girl, Susie, and they have problems because of their differences.

Real life, however, is not a soap opera. Rölvaag's goal in writing this series was to move his Norwegian brothers and sisters to love their own race, and a lack of verisimilitude would have thwarted his efforts.

Per Hansa brings half of the world of Norway with him across the plains of Iowa and into South Dakota. He is a fisherman, not a farmer; he tears through the sod like a Nordic warrior, plowing the new field by day, piling up the sod for the hut walls by night. Unfettered by societal conventions—having only a handful of neighbors and no Sunday divine service at which he would have to face the pastor or the community—raw progress becomes his God. His hut is twice the size of his neighbors' (though this forces him, much to Beret's chagrin, to put his barn under the same roof as their living quarters). Always capable of finding energy for mirth and loyal as any *paterfamilias*, he nonetheless displays his utilitarianism when, after building his sod house and planting his new field, he discovers a set of claim-stakes on his land, bearing Irish names. With only God as his witness, he simply does what he has to do—remove them and burn them.

Per reverences the Lutheran God, but more as the God of his fathers than his own. He makes no effort to catechize his children. His chief act of religious faith is one of defiance toward nature's God, and it ultimately becomes his undoing. For his friend, Hans Olsa, who lies dying, he dons skis, setting off through a blinding blizzard to fetch the pastor. Somewhere between Colton and the James River, he sits down to rest and freezes to death, leaving his family without their beloved provider.

Per Hansa's death causes Peder to question the existence of a benevolent God. Years later, Peder concludes, God must be American.

> He wanted very much to know whether Father could talk much English—Peder couldn't remember. Whenever he thought of Father, of their jolly and pleasant companionship, words were unnecessary, for Father and he came so near to each other that they needed no speech.
>
> —And why did Peder want to know that? . . .
>
> —Well, he had just been wondering, could he?
>
> —Oh, he was probably like the rest of 'em, who had come over here after they were grown up. Most of them blundered along as well as they could. Book learning, for that matter, was not Father's strong point.
>
> —But he could talk English, couldn't he? Peder couldn't conceal the anger he felt toward [his mother], nor did he try either.
>
> —Well, enough to get along . . . she supposed.
>
> —To be sure! Father could get along in everything.
>
> Peder felt better. He thought hard for a while, and then suddenly demanded to know:
>
> —Did he pray in English?
>
> His mother was long in answering. When she did there was a hard ring in her voice, which Peder couldn't understand:
>
> —Father didn't pray. And then as if to forestall another question, she added: He wasn't that kind!
>
> To Peder this didn't seem strange at all. It only made him happier, gave him a feeling of greater security. . . . What would Father pray for? He could manage everything himself.

Beret, on the other hand, prays without ceasing. She brought the other half of Norway with her to the prairie: Love for the Norwegian tongue, an imagination that felt the ghosts of Indians watching them in the fields, an intimate acquaintance with the Bible and the Lutheran symbols. But these are things that are communally shared, processed, and shared again, and separated from the Norwegian community they had left behind, their constant regurgitation slowly drives her mad. When, near the end of *Peder Victorious*, Beret is warned by Reverend Gabrielsen that Peder is damaging his soul by acting in a play, she runs down to peer through the schoolhouse window. The Norwegian and Irish children, along with a couple of Negroes, are rehearsing *Louva the Pauper*, with Peder and the pretty Irish girl Susie Doheny in the lead roles.

> What was this? There stood Permand [her diminutive for Peder] out on the floor, engaged in some silly manner with a girl—a girl . . . who was that girl? . . . God have mercy! . . . His arm was about her, her head resting on his shoulder, his face close to hers. . . . Beret found it difficult to breathe; her neck craned; her eyes had opened unnaturally wide, the pupils seemed to pop out. She couldn't see clearly because of innumerable small sparks dancing before her eyes . . . She didn't know how long she had sat thus when a voice, clearly and distinctly, spoke by her side: "Now go, and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass."

Even after Beret unsuccessfully attempts to burn down the schoolhouse, our hearts are still with her: She is coping with tremendous loss—not just the loss of a son to adulthood and a young girl, but the loss of an entire framework through which a woman of her upbringing could cope with what Rölvaag calls "The Song of Life's Dismay." Beret is capable of great things: She raises up the farm of Per Hansa's dreams; she rears three sons and a daughter; she keeps the faith. Her greatest crime is one with which many can sympathize: When Peder marries Susie Doheny, he blithely agrees that their children will be baptized Catholic. With Luther's *Ein feste burg ist unser Gott* playing over in her mind, and with thoughts of rescuing her first grandson from the clutches of the papal devil, she secretly takes little Petie to be baptized Lutheran. Years later, as she lies dying at the end of *Their Fathers' God*, she confesses, gasping for breath in the presence of Reverend Kahldahl, Peder, and Susie.

> God help me! . . . Her priest . . . came here one day . . . a year ago last summer . . . I heard what they said . . . I could not . . . let it happen . . . I could not! I talked to Peder about it . . . begged him to have the boy baptized . . . he heeded me not . . . wouldn't listen . . . To have my innocent grandchild made a Catholic . . . Per Hansa's

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grandson! . . . How could I ever meet Per Hansa face to face and tell him? . . . And what would God think of me? . . . O God! Why did You let me do this wrong! It is the mother I have sinned against!

Beret's situation is impossible because, if her religion is true, she is living as one of the children of Israel among the Canaanites. But, then again, so is Susie Doheny, who thinks she sees a demon on the bed next to her mother-in-law. Rölvaag writes: "Could Susie at that moment have flung herself upon her mother-in-law and torn her to pieces she would only have felt that she was doing an act that was pleasing in the sight of God."

Peder was called "Victorious" by Per Hansa because he was born with a natural cowl; Norwegians thought this to be a sign that a boy was destined for greatness. He embodies all of the contradictions Rölvaag found among the sons of the Vikings born on the Midwestern prairies. He resents his mother for making him "talk Norwegian." He hates Lutheran piety and loathes catechism class. His favorite holiday is not Christmas but the Fourth of July, and he memorizes the Gettysburg Address more readily than the Athanasian Creed.

On the exterior, he is Per Hansa's son. Yet, latent in Peder's mind is Beret's Norse mythology and Lutheran orthodoxy. When one of the girls in Spring Creek, Oline Tuftan, is falsely accused of bearing a bastard child and killing it in the field, she is forced to read a confession before the congregation. She later hangs herself in the barn. Peder, a self-professed atheist at age 12, lies awake, contemplating the injustice of it all. Suddenly, a shadow flashes below his bedroom.

Godmother Kjersti knew about ghosts who haunted places because they wanted people to do something for them in order to get peace. . . . And now, and now . . . this was Oline who stood there begging him to stand forth and witness before men that she was innocent! The stillness opened wide and listened throughout the whole house, and asked him what he intended to do about it. Outside the window stood someone waiting for the answer . . . There—she tapped on the window! . . . There stood Oline, big as life. In her hand she still held the paper she had read from yesterday—now she beckoned with it!

Peder and Susie begin Rölvaag's third installment, *Their Fathers' God*, as husband and wife. But theirs is not really the marriage of a Lutheran and a Catholic. Peder is even less of a Lutheran than his father. He is, for all intents and purposes, an American. His farm is his life; he is captivated by South Dakota politics; he admires Abe Lincoln; he rarely speaks Norwegian. But life, with all its twists and turns, begins to pull at Peder, and a faint disdain for his own rootlessness begins to grow. Susie's Irish Catholic community begins to reabsorb her—and threatens to do the same with their son, Petie. Suddenly, Beret's queer ways seem less embarrassing, and strings of convoluted Scripture and theology begin spilling out of his mouth.

"Do all Norwegians do that?" Susie asked. "Do what?" His arm went around her. "Do they all read the Bible?" "Oh, I rather doubt it." "Of course they don't." "Silly?" "Certainly," she said, decisively. "Because they don't understand it. That's how all the different sects get started. Why, look at the Norwegians out here! You've got two churches and two ministers and neither one will have a thing to do with the other." "Reading the Bible would enable [you Irish Catholics] to check up on the queer notions of the priests; [you] wouldn't be quite so ready to swallow everything."

"They're not that silly."

When Susie's father takes sick, Susie moves in to care for him. Her increasing attachment to him and her people mirrors her increasing detachment from Peder. When the Reverend Kahldahl comes for lunch at the Holm house, he gives a frustrated Peder some food for thought.

You have been entrusted with a rich inheritance, an inheritance built up through the ages. How much of it, what portion, are you trying to get? Isn't it your irrevocable duty to see how much of it you can preserve and hand down to those coming after you? A people that has lost its traditions is doomed!" . . .

Peder's reply burnt his throat: "It would be folly to try to build up the different European nations over here. The foundation is new, the whole structure must be new, and so it shall be!"

The Reverend replied . . . "There are many, many things that don't get into your school-books. I venture to say that your teachers taught you that the Pilgrims came to America seeking religious liberty . . . Those men were not fools; racial traditions were of vital importance to them. That's what eventually brought them to realize that if they remained in Holland their children would become Hollanders, and what was worse, they would soon lose their mother tongue. Rather than suffer such an irretrievable loss they made ready and sailed for New England."

"Can that be right?" asked Peder, dubiously.

The Reverend Kahldahl, more than any other character in the series, speaks with the voice of Rölvaag, capturing the ultimate American conquest of the Norse people. On the final page of *Their Fathers' God*, Peder loses his entire family—his wife, Susie, and his son, Petie—because the racial and cultural polarization festering in his soul—the schizophrenia dividing his mind between his Norwegian heritage and his family's Faustian bargain with America—strips him of his common decency and makes him unbearable to live with.

"I cannot," said Rölvaag, near the end of his life,

be at one with those who think that in two or three generations all difficulties will be overcome and will give way to a new and happy order. We are in the midst of a violent biological experiment, trying to make a new people out of a vast and diversified aggregation of racial and national elements. Biology is not yet ready to speak with any certainty about the probability of success. The old Norse mythology tells us that the end of the world, Ragnarok, came when the gods learned to know the power of gold, and when they began to take as their wives the maidens of other realms.

Perhaps, in Rölvaag's imagination, the English word for Ragnarok was "America."

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Ghosts of the Midwest

Russell Kirk's Moral Imagination

Scott P. Richert

The decline of the Midwest as a cultural force was well under way by the time Russell Kirk was born in Plymouth, Michigan, in 1918. Yankee influence in the region had largely been replaced by a more vibrant German-American culture, and now the United States, in the midst of the War to End All Wars, was engaged in a war against that culture on the homefront. The period between 1914 and 1933 would prove crucial. By the time Kirk entered junior high, he was forced to take a course in civics—"a Deweyite innovation," as he described it. Today, of course, conservatives rise up in arms at any attempt to remove civics courses from the public-school curriculum. But *circa* 1930, those courses were an important part of the attempts—directed from Washington, D.C., and East Coast academia—to wipe out regional and ethnic differences and to make all citizens generically American. In the Midwest, those assaults were all too successful.

Kirk continued his education at Michigan State College of Agriculture and Applied Science, known today simply as Michigan State University. After he received his M.A. in history from Duke University in 1941, he entered the U.S. Army and spent the entire war at Dugway Proving Ground in Utah, rising to the rank of staff sergeant in the Chemical Warfare Service.

Between 1946 and 1952, Kirk spent one semester a year teaching history at Michigan State and the rest of his time in doctoral studies at St. Andrews, the senior Scottish university. Upon graduation, the first American to receive the Doctor of Letters degree from St. Andrews, Kirk briefly taught full-time at Michigan State before resigning in disgust over the college's poor academic standards. (When, as a junior at Michigan State 36 years later, I first met Dr. Kirk, I asked him what he thought of MSU's current academic standards. "Uhhmm. Much worse," he replied. A prolific writer, he could also be a man of frighteningly few words.)

The same year that Dr. Kirk left Michigan State, he published his most famous book, *The Conservative Mind*, and made a surprising decision that would shape the rest of his life. Despite the almost complete intellectual marginalization of the Midwest, Dr. Kirk did not accept offers to teach at Yale or the University of California at Riverside, universities that would have provided him a certain standing in American intellectual life; instead, he took possession of Piety Hill, his mother's ancestral home in Mecosta, Michigan. Both the home and the town had been built by Amos Johnson, Dr. Kirk's great-grandfather. Johnson's uncle, Giles Gilbert, had been the lumber baron of Central Michigan, one of the men responsible for the almost complete destruction of the vast pine and hardwood forests that once completely blanketed the glacial soils of Michigan. During the lumber boom of the 1880's, Mecosta's population reached its high point of 2,000. By the time Gilbert departed for Oregon in the late 1800's (pursuing "the retreating trees," as Dr. Kirk would write), few trees remained in Central Michigan—or, indeed, across the state. Because the soil in Mecosta County was so poor, the land was still largely barren when Kirk arrived in 1953, its flatness broken only by the remains of the massive stumps that the loggers had left behind.

It was at Piety Hill that Dr. Kirk wrote almost all of his 30 books and hundreds of articles and reviews, and it was there that he tried to live what he called "a life of decent independence, living much as his ancestors had lived, on their land, in circumstances that would enable him to utter the truth and make

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his voice heard: a life uncluttered and unpolluted, not devoted to getting and spending." It was there that he brought his wife Annette, a Long Island native, in 1964; and there that they reared their four daughters, Monica, Cecilia, Felicia, and Andrea. And it was there, in the midst of a village now reduced to fewer than 200 people, that Dr. Kirk came to view himself as a Northern Agrarian.

The Jeffersonian vision of decentralized power, small-scale living, and the yeoman farmer captured Dr. Kirk's imagination. Like the Southern Agrarians, he saw that vision increasingly threatened by industrialization and the heightened pace of technological change, and he knew intimately what his own ancestors' shortsighted obsession with progress and profit had wrought in the landscape around Piety Hill.

During his college years, Kirk spent his summers as a guide at Greenfield Village, where he met Henry Ford. Later in life, Dr. Kirk would come to believe that Ford incarnated both the best aspects of America in the 19th century and the worst of America in the 20th. "Henry Ford," he wrote,

> had the instincts of an antiquary, but also the practical talents that had effaced the rural life and the farmlands where he had been born and reared. Behind the serpentine brick walls of [Greenfield] Village, he had preserved the simple house of his birth, the rural school he had attended, and other buildings of his boyhood. . . . So far as it lay in his power, Henry Ford endeavored to save from extinction the rural society of his boyhood; but multimillionaire though he was, all his capital seemed trifling beside the forces of indiscriminate growth that he . . . had set into operation . . . He had made it possible for almost anybody to whiz about in a motorcar, escaping for a time from private tribulations; possible also to dwell many miles distant from one's place of employment; possible as well for couples to court in a mobile privacy, for malefactors to prowl and escape with ease, for tipsy youths to blot out others' lives and their own on icy roads, for entrepreneurs to pull down every handsome old house that stood on a corner lot so that gasoline stations might rise there.

Ultimately, the two centuries could not coexist, not in Ford, and not in time. Dr. Kirk, seeing that the 20th century was draining the life out of his beloved Mecosta, threw his lot in with the older America. The automobile, he would later write, is "a mechanical Jacobin, overthrowing dominations and powers, breaking the cake of custom, running over oldfangled manners and morals, making the very air difficult to breathe." "Although no social philosopher," Dr. Kirk wrote in his memoirs, "Henry Ford surely must have perceived before he died (alone with his wife, in an unlit house, in 1947 . . .) some of the consequences of the changes worked by himself and other great industrialists of the time."

Dr. Kirk's vision was not only Jeffersonian and agrarian but Romantic, and in his fiction, he was influenced more, perhaps, by Sir Walter Scott than by any other writer. Against both the excesses and the limitations of reason, he stressed the centrality of imagination, which he, like Irving Babbitt, believed played the primary role in forming man's moral sense. Discussing the genesis of his own novels and short stories in *Decadence and Renewal in the Higher Learning*, Kirk writes that

> The image . . . can raise us on high, as did Dante's high dream; also it can draw us down the abyss. It is a matter of the truth or the falsity of images. If we study good images in religion, in literature, in music, in the visual arts—why, the spirit is uplifted, and in some sense liberated from the trammels of the flesh. But if we submit ourselves (which is easy to do nowadays) to evil images—why, we become what we admire. Within limits, the will is free.

"When I write fiction," Dr. Kirk continues,

> I do not commence with a well-concerted formal plot. Rather, there occur to my imagination certain images, little scenes, snatches of conversation, strong lines of prose. I patch together these fragments, retaining and embellishing the sound images, discarding the unsound, finding a continuity to join them. Presently I have a coherent narration, with some point to it.

Against both the excesses and the limitations of reason, Dr. Kirk stressed the centrality of imagination, which he, like Irving Babbitt, believed played the primary role in forming man's moral sense.

Conservatives today, when they bother with Dr. Kirk at all, approach him as a moral and political thinker: They are often disturbed by his fiction. They examine Dr. Kirk's ghost stories and fantasy tales (which will be rereleased by Eerdmans in the fall of 2002) the way a deconstructionist approaches Shakespeare. What message is he privileging? How can these fantastic and spectral tales make us more moral? How can scenes of kidnapping, and haunting, and murder advance the conservative agenda in Washington, D.C.? In discussing Dr. Kirk's fiction that way, they miss the very point. His tales are not meant to be didactic—though they are, Dr. Kirk would insist, products of the moral imagination, and, thus, the reader should be better off for having read them. Their purpose, however, is simply to tell a story—to reflect, and perhaps magnify, and certainly embellish, a portion of reality.

Why, though, did Dr. Kirk choose to write ghost stories and fantasy tales? Partly, of course, because he had always enjoyed such tales himself. More importantly, however, in the postwar, post-Henry Ford, industrialized, mechanized, materialistic world, what portion of reality needed more magnification and embellishment than the ghostly realm? How better than through ghost stories to awaken the human "products" of American consumer culture to the fullness of the world around them?

Surely Dr. Kirk did not really believe in ghosts? the modern

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conservative asks, proving that he has missed the point once again. Of course he believed in ghosts, and not simply because he was certain that he had seen them. As he wrote in his memoirs, "Both on authority and through his own insights and experiences, Kirk had come to understand that there exists a realm of being beyond this temporal world and that a mysterious providence works in human affairs—that man is made for eternity. Such knowledge," he concluded, "had been consolation and compensation for sorrow." "No doctrine," he argued, "is more comforting than the teaching of Purgatory . . . For purgatorily, one may be granted opportunity to atone for having let some precious life run out like water from a neglected tap into sterile sands."

Throughout the 20th century, horror stories and ghost stories converged, a disturbing development that inevitably involved the mixing of forms, the loss of distinctions—the turning of ghosts into demons, and demons into ghosts. This convergence is as destructive of a proper understanding of humanity as is the concurrent blurring of the lines between men and angels. Angels and demons share a nature, though the former is beatific, the latter fallen; but man (and his ghost) is a creature all his own. He is bound by space and by time. That is why, in a true ghost story, the ghost is always tied to a particular place, and why, when he appears, his manifestation reflects a particular point in time, in the clothes he wears or in other aspects of his appearance. While men can attempt to ignore their own nature and refuse to put down roots, their spirits—which, after death, now know the truth—cannot be anything other than rooted. Unlike the demon, the ghost does not, in the words of the ancient prayer to the Archangel Michael, "prowl about the world, seeking the ruin of souls." Instead, the ghost seeks the expiation of his sins, which occurred in (or at least are tied to) the place in which he appears. As Dr. Kirk explained: "The resurrection of the flesh and the life everlasting are sought not so much that one should prolong his own existence but rather that beyond time one might explain and atone." When his sins are expiated, the ghost goes on to his final destination.

Dr. Kirk's agrarian vision and his relationship to the countryside around Piety Hill was shaped in large part by his own understanding of the need for atonement and expiation. Virtually from the first day that he became master of Piety Hill, he set about undoing his ancestors' destruction of the countryside; he regarded his efforts at reforestation as his moral duty. He planted his first trees just to the west of Piety Hill, in Civilian Conservation Corps style—straight rows, front to back and side to side. Several years later, Dr. Kirk realized that, like the CCC, he had planted the rows too close together, and so, like his ancestors, he became (briefly) a woodsman. As time went on, he came to understand that the problem was not simply that his ancestors had removed all of the trees in Mecosta County but that they had destroyed the landscape. He soon abandoned the geometric, CCC-style plantings and tried to conform his efforts to the features of the land. Over his 40 years at Piety Hill, Dr. Kirk—aided by his family and numerous assistants and houseguests—remade the landscape of Mecosta County, replanting thousands of trees.

That landscape figured prominently in Dr. Kirk's fiction, and not simply as a setting for his stories. I first met Dr. Kirk at a seminar at Piety Hill, organized by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. After lunch on the second day, he offered to take those of us who were interested on a walkabout through the countryside. By the time he had covered a quarter-mile, Dr. Kirk—who was 71 at the time—had left all but two of us well behind, and we two were wearing ourselves out just trying to keep up. The effort, however, was well worth it, because, as we walked along, Dr. Kirk would lift his walking stick every few minutes and say, for instance, "Uhhm. This is the house where I set my story, 'Off the Sand Road.' And that—that is the Sand Road." Over the course of close to an hour and a half, we discovered that he not only knew every path, every field, every house, every tree within a few miles around Piety Hill; he had written about many of them as well, and not just in the stories that were explicitly set in Mecosta County.

> In his fiction, Dr. Kirk remade not only the landscape of Mecosta County; he remade the landscape of his own life.

At the time, I did not really comprehend what Dr. Kirk was doing in showing us those sights. Even five years later, when I reviewed his memoirs for *Chronicles*, I wrote that,

> To his eyes, Mecosta, shunned and despised by the commissars of big government, big business, and big culture, was a Brigadoon. As a business partner of Kirk's once remarked, "Russell, you are the last of the Romantics, and probably the greatest: for nobody else could make tales out of that God-forsaken Mecosta County."

But, reading more of Dr. Kirk's fiction over the last few years, I have come to realize that he was doing more than making tales out of Mecosta County; he was *making* Mecosta County, fleshing it out, giving it an imaginative depth and richness that it lacked—or that, at least, had disappeared by the time he took possession of Piety Hill. His fiction changed the face of Mecosta County as surely as did his incessant planting. When his children or his numerous assistants or his distinguished visitors at Piety Hill read those stories, they began to see the forest, not just the trees; they came to see that Mecosta was not just a crossroads on a map. It was—it is—the center of the universe for thousands of people, some of whom are now alive, most of whom are now dead.

In his fiction, Dr. Kirk remade not only the landscape of Mecosta County; he remade the landscape of his own life. He drew the central action and much of the dialogue of "The Princess of All Lands" (perhaps his best short story; certainly, one of the best loved) from an actual incident involving his wife. Mrs. Kirk had picked up a hitchhiker one cold October day, and the girl, who eventually revealed that she had a gun, ordered Mrs. Kirk to take her home to her father, where she intended to present her as a birthday gift to him. When they arrived at the house, in a remote section of Central Michigan, the girl got out of the car first, and Mrs. Kirk managed to slam the door and speed away. Up until this point, "The Princess of All Lands" very closely resembles Dr. Kirk's account, in his mem-

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oirs, of the actual incident. But in "The Princess," Mrs. Kirk's character, Yolande, is forced out of the car and presented to the girl's father and brother, who turn out to be ghosts who, when alive, had tormented her every seven years. The previous year, they had died in a shootout after kidnapping another woman. Yolande, recognizing them, tells them that they are dead, and then, Dr. Kirk writes,

> In those three faces Yolande saw a fury and a ravaging doubt such as she never had glimpsed before. Risen from the bench, the three lost ones wavered before her, hands clutching at nothingness. . . .
>
> Then the Princess of All Lands uttered the ancient formula, shouting it into the abyss: "Go ye cursed into the fire everlasting, which is prepared for the devil and his angels!"
>
> Before her the three of them writhed, speechless in agony, seared, incandescent, disintegrating. Then, the virtue ebbing out of her, Yolande fainted in her chair.

While these ghosts were destined for everlasting damnation, they still had temporal sins that required temporal punishment, and Yolande, because of her relationship to them, becomes the instrument of that punishment.

Why did Dr. Kirk turn his wife's terrifying experience into an even more terrifying story? Why not simply let the waters of time wash the memory away? His understanding of the nature of fiction makes the answer clear: Here was an opportunity to coax meaning out of an event that might otherwise serve to convince some people of the randomness and meaninglessness of life.

What a contrast with the common attitude—even among conservatives—toward fiction. Instead of regarding it as "silly" or "trivial" compared to the struggles of life, Dr. Kirk came to regard the imagination as our primary weapon in those struggles. That is why he gave the title *The Sword of Imagination* to his memoirs, which he composed in the third person, more in the style of fiction than of autobiography. One of the final paragraphs of that book, written shortly before his death, provides perhaps the best insight into Dr. Kirk's approach to the world:

> This present life here below, Kirk had perceived often in his mind's eye, is an ephemeral existence, precarious, as in an arena rather than upon a stage: some men are meant to be gladiators or knights-errant, not mere strolling players. Swords drawn, they stand on a darkling plain against all comers and all odds; how well they bear themselves in the mortal struggle will determine in what condition they shall put on incorruption. His sins of omission and commission notwithstanding, Kirk had blown his horn and drawn his sword of imagination, in the arena of the blighted twentieth century, that he might assail the follies of the time.

With Dr. Kirk's death on April 29, 1994, that blade may have lost its latest master, but its edge has not been blunted. If there is any hope for a revival of Russell Kirk's Midwestern agrarian vision, it is largely because those who have read his works have had their imaginations awakened by the sunlight glinting off of his sword. c

Firebrand

by William Baer

Beware. My genesis is now. I rise,
miraculously, from the black abyss,
I breathe, I swelter, and I oxidize
into a frenzy of pyrolysis.
A speck of flameless fire, I multiply,
forseeing, even guaranteeing,
the burn and scorch of all this earth and sky,
and best of all, the flesh of the human being.
And when I'm done, when all the seas are dry,
the bluish planet will float through the smothering night
as black and vapid in the skyless sky
as its pathetic ugly satellite.
Like sin, deceit, and lust, I'm everywhere,
scheming your incineration. Beware.

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A Geography of Snow

A Story

by Anthony Bukoski

My father has to go out in a storm. An eight-hour shift at the gasworks, then two or three hours tomorrow morning, All Soul's Day morning, in a bar where "Happy Hour" starts at 7:30 A.M. and ends at noon, and he'll walk home through the snow stinking of beer and CH_4, the chemical composition of natural gas. If you want to know how it smells in our house, scratch and sniff the card the utility company gives you so you can detect a leak in one of your gas-burning appliances. What the company adds is an "odorant." My father and our house smell like an odorant.

Pani or "Madam" Pilsudski, our neighbor, likes the smell when she comes over. "Oo-la-la," she says when she gets a whiff. As my father grumbles and I page through my scrapbook of interesting newspaper stories, Mother starts talking to her in Polish in the living room. I try not to listen, having important things to do on my hobby.

My scrapbook has a three-ring metal binding and gray canvas covers. In light blue ink, I'm putting on the front cover, "STRANGE, FUNNY NEWS GATHERED BY ANDREW BORUCZKI." The cover is hard to write on, and I have to go over the letters, almost carving them in. Because of it, the front cover looks sloppy, which, when he sees it, serves as an irritant, not an odorant, to my father, who is trying to raise me right and who, sitting here in a sleeveless undershirt with a tuft of hair curling up from his chest, says to me, "What're you doing?"

"Studying my clippings."

"Why you won't think of me for one minute? I gotta go in this weather to the plant. Put the scrapbook away and ask 'what can I do for my father?'"

When I do ask, he answers, "I don't know. Just don't bury your head in a scrapbook all a-time."

In five hours, he has to leave for work on a night the radio said would be clear and mild. The weather depresses him. His job, combined with his naturally gloomy personality, inspire him to get drunk at the Warsaw Tavern, especially now around All Soul's Day. When the weather and your job stink, when your life is passing you by and you will soon be a dead soul yourself, why not go on a rumba? To relieve the pressures of my life, I can't go to taverns like he does; but tonight, if he doesn't stop complaining, I'll do something else drastic and tomorrow's newspaper will read, "Adolescent punches gas-stinking father during blizzard," which will fit into my newspaper-clipping collection like this item from the *Superior Evening Telegram*. Right now the lead clipping in the news collection, it's taped to a sheet of typing paper. In my scrapbook, the current No. 1 Best Story, Pick of the Week from the local paper of October 25-31, 1968, tells of a woman who ties her boy's hands together, dresses him in a pig suit, then puts him on public display. It is from California, an Associated Press story. As further punishment, the mother hangs a sign on her boy in the pig suit. The sign reads:

> I'm dumb pig [*sic*]. Ugly is what you will become if you lie and steal. Look at me squeal [*sic*]. My hands are tied because I cannot be trusted. This is a lesson to be learned. Look. Laugh. Thief. Stealing. Bad bo [*sic*].

"Mom denies abusing son dressed as pig," says the headline. (I had to look up what "*sic*" meant.)

Another clipping reports on something closer to home. You will find it on page 2:

> Child abuse
>
> Gerard Minahan, Gordon, Wisc., used a marker to write "liar" in large letters on his ten-year-old son's forehead, "I lied to friends and teacher" on his chest, and "I tell stories" on his back. Then he took his shirtless son to P&R Pub in Hawthorne and made him talk to customers and display the writings.

Now, my pop mutters, "They promised a sunny day, and look-it what we got!" He uses the Polish word for snow, "*śnieg*." Four or five inches of it cover the birdbath.

"Maybe this'll be my last Halloween," I say. "Who's going to give out candy on a stormy night? Darn this snow!"

"I *geev* candy," Mrs. Pilsudski says.

"Boy's too old for trick-or-treating," my pop says. "What're you, nineteen?"

"Fourteen. Tad's nineteen," I say, referring to my cousin. Home from Vietnam, he is named after Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the Polish patriot who helped General Washington win the

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Revolution.

"Ah, go upstairs," says Pa. "Read your scrapbook. Play with your winter weed collection. Look at the weather. No, lemme tell you a thing or two. You know what's falling outside?"

"What?" I ask as I leave the kitchen.

"Sh-t from the sky."

"*Sheet* from sky," Mrs. Pilsudski says, repeating in broken English Pa's weather-related complaint.

"That's northern Wisconsin for you," Pa says. "Worst climate in the world is in 'Siberior,'" which is a word he's made up by combining "Superior and "Siberia."

In the living room, I watch Ma and Mrs. Pilsudski, who whispers "*sheet* from sky" over and over as she stares out at the weather. Ma says we must be patient with Mrs. Pilsudski when she forgets and leaves open the bathroom door at our house, but I saw what she was doing once, and it was awful. She wore heavy black shoes, thick, skin-colored stockings, and a shapeless housedress with yellow cornstalks on it, a style of dress a lot of Old Country women around here wear. Girdle about her knees, the heavyset Mrs. Pilsudski, who cuts the calluses off of peoples' feet for a living, hovered over our toilet. Through the open door, I spotted her busying herself, and I cannot say more on the subject. Tonight, with Mrs. Pilsudski worrying about getting home, she will wet our couch for sure; and, once *Pani* leaves, Ma will dab the cushion and say, "Be patient with her. Yes, she leaves open the bathroom door and dampens the couch, but patience please."

"I'm going upstairs," I say.

"You should give us all a break," says Ma. "Go study your wildflowers."

With the Lake Superior wind blowing hard outside, I sort through dried weeds, tape them to cardboard squares, write beneath each one "Wild Rye," "Caraway," "Tansy." Tan and yellow weeds from our fields and woods keep me awfully busy. The weed-cards are fun. They pass the time for me like clipping newspaper items does. A brittle weed I collected once and mounted on cardboard, "Fireweed," also has a news clipping beside it that kind of matches it. From page 10, *Scrapbook*:

Hot under the collar

> Mourners smelled smoke at a funeral. When a mortician investigated, he found a fire inside a coffin. Investigators said embalming fluid leaking from the body of 42-year-old John "Jack" Peters may have caused a chemical reaction, touching off the fire.

Another clipping reminding me of no one or nothing—and certainly of no weed—starts, "Ashland, Wisc. woman charged with adultery" (page 11, *Scrapbook*). It tells that "enforcement of an adultery law attracted worldwide attention and is raising questions about the old statute's constitutionality." Then you read how over-the-road truck driver B.M. Bertilson asked the district attorney to prosecute his wife "under the law that hadn't been used in Wisconsin in the 20th century." Mr. Bertilson said his wife Lotty admitted breaking the law "while he was on the road" far from Ashland. What weed or plant could complement this story—Pokeweed? Bouncing Bet? Aaron's Rod?

Another weed-mounted-on-cardboard, Heal All, matches a news clipping that recalls cousin Thaddeus. Page 13, *Scrapbook*, talks about a man dressed in robes and pulling a heavy wooden cross down the highway outside town. "Second Coming could be in the Northland" reads the headline.

The article said a man yelled "Praise the Lord" when a cop, who goes to our church, offered him assistance. Then, when the officer told him it was a highway hazard pulling this cross down the road, the newspaper article said the man offered "passive resistance," so Lieutenant Gunski arrested him and the cross. On the way to town, Lieutenant Gunski stored the cross in the East End gas station back with the motor oils, then put the man in jail until his mother sent money to pay the fine. I made up a headline for this one: "Case of arrested cross." But you don't read the real surprise until the end. When the man with the "dark blond hair pulled back in a ponytail" got out of jail to get his property,

> he placed the huge cross over his shoulder and trudged off. Only he'd rigged it so the walking was easier than it was on Jesus' long haul up Calvary. "He had a neat wheel on the back of it. Still, if you're dragging that sucker down the highway, it's got to be heavy," said the gas station owner, George Polkoski.

When snow is piled against the bedroom window and when the cedar tree is bent far over from wet snow, more news comes, a banging on the front door—Souls of the Faithful Departed walking in the storm. Soon, cold air shoots upstairs.

"Hey, look-it this!" I hear Pa say.

He likes Thaddeus, who's just arrived but as suddenly disappeared. Thaddeus is one of many servicemen, especially Marines, to come from East End.

"Close the door you were breaking down out there a second ago," says Ma. "You are sure in a hurry to get inside, Tad."

As I head to the hallway at the bottom of the stairs, I watch *Pani* Pilsudski pulling an afghan over her shoulders. "Hey, where'd Tad go? He vanish from sight and become a dead soul?"

"I just told him to shut the porch door, that's all," Mother says.

"Good afternoon, everyone," Tad says. "You're darn right I wanted in. The thing I don't like about the dark is it's always dark. Geez, I took quite a fall outside."

Though Thaddeus is too young to drink, people buy him beer and wine. He's been on a rumba. A red-and-white wool tossle cap warms his ears. Over his haunted eyes rest blue, square-shaped sunglasses like The Byrds wear. He has on a knee-length, forest-green uniform overcoat with the red cloth patches on the sleeves showing he's a Marine lance corporal. Snow sticks to one elbow and to the side of the coat. He's fallen down and looks crazy.

"I'm out of uniform. You're not suppose' to wear sunglasses. It ain't military," he says. "What stinks in here? You let one, Mrs. Pilsudski?"

"*Me*! I stink," says Pa. "It's the odorant so you know what a real gas leak smells like in your home appliances."

"We know what *you* smell like. Say," Tad asks, "what kind of kid collects weeds for a hobby? And newspaper clippings? This ain't normal." He waits a minute. "No, I don't think it *is* normal," he answers himself, laughing.

My father stands in the archway between kitchen and living room. "How long you got left on your leave at home?" he asks.

"Tomorrow . . . tonight," says Tad. "All Soul's and Halloweenie."

"Then where you go be stationed?" asks *Pani* Pilsudski.

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"I've told you one hundred times, Mrs. Pilsudski," Tad says. "Turn up your hearing aid."

"No, you haven't told us once," Ma says.

"Wounds affected your memory?" Pa asks. "Have you seen his Purple Heart, Mrs. Pilsudski? Our nephew here is suffering wounds."

She daydreams of something or someplace else and doesn't answer.

My mother sure doesn't think Tad's showing up here drunk is very funny. During her happily married life near the Northern Pacific ore dock, she's seen too many neighborhood men getting drunk, fighting, hollering, falling in the snow. It's like in the Old Country. A weekly Polish paper, the *Gwiazda Polarna*, recently reported how a cold wave killed 36 people in Poland. Most of them were drinkers who went outside or fell asleep in unheated rooms. Just two old women froze, I read.

When Tad takes the heavy Marine overcoat off, we see how thin he's become.

"I'm going back to Vietnam," he says. "Can't eat nothing. Can't keep it down. Too worried."

When he removes his tossle cap, a line divides the tanned part of his face from the pale part. It's like this from his wearing a helmet three months ago. The pale part will never go away. I think he will be marked by this Vietnam war and by a pale forehead forever.

"Got you a present, Edda," he says, pulling a bottle of vodka from the inside of the greatcoat. Next, he produces a paper he's kept beneath his jacket.

"Going back to Vietnam. Goddam it, I'm going back."

"Well," Pa says, "you're sure gonna have the last laugh on us, because next week you'll be where it's hot and tropical."

"Over there, it'll be the monsoon season, when your clothes get moldy green fuzz on them. Your shoes rot, too. It's what I'm gonna call *you*, Andy—'Mold Fuzz,'" Thaddeus says to me. "It's your new name."

"I like it," I say.

"Your weather'll be better than the siege of winter we're gonna get," says the gas man, my father. "It's starting early this year."

"I don't want to go. I made a mistake, Uncle Edda. I'm okay. I signed up for a tour. Goddam. But I'm okay. I can't remember if I said I was going back or not. I forget everything these days. Here—"

The vodka looks slightly greenish or yellowish in the bottle.

"Look, Andy!" says Pa.

In it is a stem of something. Thaddeus says, "European bison food. Distiller puts this herb in each bottle. It colors and flavors the product. '*Żubrówka*' Bison Brand Vodka. I can't recall where I got it," he says. "Someplace where I was drinking last night. Read this to us, Andy Fuzz-Mold."

The label says, "Flavored with an extract of the fragrant herb beloved by the European Bison," I read. I turn the bottle sideways. The herb floating in vodka hypnotizes us.

"Gimme," my pa says. "Let's look at it."

"You have to work, Edda. You can't drink," Ma says. Putting water glasses out for the vodka, she brings Mrs. Pilsudski her glass. "*Jesu*," I hear *Pani* exclaiming after one sip. After two, I hear her singing a radio commercial for this wine that's always advertised: "One sip of Arriba, and you, too, will hear the beat-beat-beat of the bongos."

With everyone drinking, everyone crazy, I admit Tad looks great. He *is* cool. I don't call him a "soldier"; I call him a "Marine." A new kind of savage fighter in the Asian jungle, he dresses out of uniform and wears dark granny glasses, but despite what he looks and acts like when he is home recovering from his wounds, he wants to win the war. I'm glad he is a member of the Boruczki clan, and I hope I can put him in my *Scrapbook of Brave Men* under the heading "Cousin Thaddeus Milszewski."

Still uncertain of his feelings, I ask him, "Do you want to go to Vietnam?"

"Oh no . . . oh sure," he says. "I've been wounded once. I'll fight like heck."

"Beat-beat go the bongos," says *Pani*. "Oo-la-la. Smell *goot* in house."

"It's all right if you're afraid to go back," Pa says. "I'm afraid some nights at the gasworks."

"I'm not afraid," Tad says.

"That's the spirit," says my dad, clinking glasses with Thaddeus. From the kitchen table, my crazy-looking cousin picks up the piece of paper he brought in. Off-white in color, blank with no lines on it, the folded map is a foot long, maybe ten or eleven inches wide. When he opens it into two halves, we still see only the back part.

"Are you ready?" he asks. He drinks more vodka, nibbles a piece of herb. "You'll see a map of your life."

Pa sips his vodka. He gives me a drink of it in preparation for what Tad is going to show us.

Opening the paper to expose its four quarters, Thaddeus keeps the blank side toward us. We see eyes behind blue lenses, half-pale, half-tan face, two hands holding up the paper, which he then turns.

"Wow!" I say. It has so many lines, dots, squares. There are light blue and green places, pink and purple ones. You see thin lines and circles drawn in black. The map unfolded is at least two feet by two feet, I figure. When he spreads it out, the paper covers much of the kitchen table.

"What is it of?" I ask before I see that blue represents the lakes and rivers of our home . . . of the "NE/4 Superior 15' Quadrangle of Superior, Wisc."

"It's as topographic as I'll ever want to get," Tad says. "I ordered it through the mail. I'm gonna educate the Viet Cong."

Overcoat off, he hangs his green uniform jacket on the back of the kitchen chair, then smooths the jacket. His tie and shirt are tan. The lance corporal rank insignias on the shirt sleeves are darker green than the lime-green parts of the map. "The VC will see and fear Superior, Wisconsin," my cousin says. "They will learn to fear Superior, especially East End. They will feel the wrath of a true son of the East End."

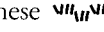
"Take a drink," says Pa to me. "Say 'oo-la-la,' Andy. Smell CH_4."

"I like the smell on your clothes, Pa," I say.

Nibbling herb, Tad says, "I need strength to go back there. It's gonna take real guts to show them my wrath."

"You need a map of home," I tell Tad.

Among various features on it are:

1. lime-green colored swamps and wetlands with blue marks like these  to indicate marsh grass.

2. our town in pink with symbols on it for churches like St. Adalbert's; symbols for schools, docks, railyards, sandpits, the hospital, the cemeteries; for roads that cross through woods, creeks, and swamps; for railroad trestles

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symbolized like this XXX . One of the biggest trestles stands here by ours and Mrs. Pilsudski's house.

3. the creeks and the blue rivers, one flowing to the southwest and off the map, another flowing north past our house to the bay, then out into the largest freshwater lake in the world.

Looking at the map, my cousin pours another drink. In the living room, Ma and Mrs. Pilsudski talk about the weather.

"The leg?" Pa asks Thaddeus.

"Healed up okay. In two weeks, I'll be over there with this map. Sprout," he says to me, "I'm going to promote you from a non-entity to a Private First Class. 'To All Who Hear These Presents, Greetings,'" he says like he's reading a proclamation. Then he gives me a blue booklet whose cover reads in black letters:

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF
THE THADDEUS KOSCIUSZKO CLUB
Composed of All the Slavic People in
the Superior, Wisc. Area
Organized August 1st, 1928

"I joined up," Tad says. "All you have to do is pay the membership fee, first year's dues of six dollars, and prove you're Polish, which ain't hard in this neighborhood. I wanna lay claim to being in the Polish Club of Superior. If I get killed in Vietnam, then at least you'll always know I joined the Club. I'll have a map, too. It'll be close by so a medic can get it for me while I am dying. In the newspapers, you'll read about there being the casualty of a hometown boy. Sh-t, I'm gonna have to leave home!" He kisses the map. "Edda, the Purple Heart is authentic. They gave it to me. But what did I get it for? I hate to tell you this. I might never see you again. Geez, I've had too much beer tonight—I'm a cook, Edda. Christ, like Mrs. Pilsudski or some Polish *baba*. A cook! Never told no one. The guys like my cooking. They ask for *pierogi* when they come back from search-and-destroy operations near An Ho. *Pierogi*, of all things. Oh, I'm glad I joined the Club."

It is like he is almost crying, but I know Tad is strong, and he is cool in sunglasses, and even Pa thinks so and will not accept that Tad is only a cook in the Marines.

I take a sip of Tad's vodka.

"Andy, don't let them have no more in there," Ma calls to me. "And what are you doing with the men?"

"It's a map," I say. "He's got the Polish Club membership rules with him, too."

Trying to change the subject from Tad's culinary art, my father points to the Left-Handed River my cousin's just kissed. Pa is saying, "These lines show the height of hill and valley. You read the lay of the land by them. The purple waving lines, the contour lines, represent ten-foot intervals. Says so right here. You don't needa believe me, but you should believe what a map says before you on this very table in a Polish household."

Where both my grandfathers rest in the cemetery, the Nemadji River, also called Left-Handed River, sweeps in a wide blue arc on the topographical map. Flowing beneath the Chicago & North Western trestle, the river runs through a swamp, then past more neighbors' houses.

As Thaddeus bends to kiss another area of the map, I figure that, according to the contour lines, the land above the river must drop 30 feet as it nears the bay. All of this is marked on the map. Sometimes, in real life, the Left-Handed River reverses course. Instead of entering the bay from the south the way it does, the river appears as if it's running back to where it came from. This happens when northwest winds create whitecaps on the lake.

"If I kiss the place," Tad's saying, "then I'm okay. But how do you kiss a neighborhood? I've never done nothing brave. At least lemme study this map a little and get some strength."

"You'll be home soon. You'll be discharged."

Surprised by something on the map as they are talking, I point to it, telling them to look. Pa must swallow his *Żubrówka* the wrong way because he has to cough. "It's the old railroad water tower near the bay," he says. "'WT' means Water Tower. I forgot about it. Now my kid spots 'er. The round tank, the funnel that trains got water from. Great. You're some map reader, Andy," he congratulates me. "The water tower has been torn down for a long time."

"What's this on the map, the 'Pesthouse'?" I ask.

"It's not here anymore," he tells me.

"Am I here?" asks Tad. "Do I exist? Man, too much beer and vodka."

As we study the map's contours as though they were contours of our lives, Pa says, "In purple at the bottom it's got 'Revisions compiled and map edited 1964.' But over here . . . 'Topography from aerial photographs taken 1959.' It's 1968. I'm looking at 'er and seeing that things have changed. No 'Home for the Aged.' No 'Poor Farm.' No 'Pesthouse.' Tore down so many years ago like other things. I suppose it's how they do things at a map company."

"I don't know why they sent me an old map."

Despite the dated topography, Tad kisses it again, and I wonder, could I ever feel such love for the East End?

It is strange when the church bell rings. At six o'clock, storm or not, it rings everyday; but now the kitchen clock reads 6:07, and we're examining a map of old places, and the bell rings and startles me.

It must be the weather; snow changes contours. In winter blizzards, in summer heat, I've heard the bell as I explored beneath the trestle, floated in Burbul's canoe on the river, or walked over the ice on the bay before the first snow. I've heard the bell out on Hog Island and heard it at the cemetery above the Left-Handed River. Always at six o'clock. Now today, it rings late.

In the living room, *Pani* says "beat-beat." Her head falls. She dozes.

"Rivers don't change," Tad says. "Goddam. I've gotta do a brave thing. I want to be remembered as the East End man who wore a Purple Heart on his chest. Oh, this heart, Uncle Edda and Fuzz Mold! A crate of large eggs fell on me. Then a barrel of S.O.S. on top . . . chipped beef, chunks of ground beef in a cream sauce. 'S.O.S.' is short for '*Sheet* on a shingle,' as Mrs. Pilsudski would say it. There mighta been bread involved in this incident, five or six loaves. Throw in sausage links. Throw in oatmeal. They all fell. A food accident crushed me. I have the leg to prove it. We were going to the field to bring a meal to the grunts. We'd rewarm it when we got there. Intelligence said everything was hunky-dory on the road. They cleared us to go. Our truck convoy carried field stoves, food, ice for tea, immersion heaters for the troops to dip mess kits in hot water after chow—

"Staff Sergeant Farrazzi was up in the cab with the driver.

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We didn't rope stuff down good. Only the eggs were tied in a little. The driver swerved to miss a peasant walking his water buffalo . . . the peasant was heading through this storm swirl of butterflies, which the driver swerved to avoid. The driver'd got his military license for that weight of truck only a month before. Here I am a lance corporal who'd made many a tasty *soufflé* and who wanted his Belgian waffles to be the best in the 9th Marine Expeditionary Brigade, and I'm wounded by eggs and bread. I'm drunk. Do you know Ho Chi Minh collected butterflies?"

"Don't talk none about war," my pop says. "You're my sister's boy. It is a shame you can't feel like a hero. I don't believe what you told us. You're no cook. You're a hero, though drunk."

"I could make you something to eat," Thaddeus says. "Eggs and toast, kielbasa and eggs to prove my courage. Everybody likes Polish sausage."

"Won't kielbasa remind you of combat?" I ask.

"What are you talking about?" Mother asks. "Get your cousin a cup of coffee right now, Andrew. He has to sober up. You all sound rattle-brained. Stop drinking before you get too crazy. Straighten up."

"He don't need coffee," says my father, pouring him a glass of *Żubrówka* as Tad tries to speak Polish. Outside, tree branches and pine boughs litter the snow. Drunken night, Polish words, storm, map. We sit in a kitchen where I think the contour of a life, the history of a life, must run like purple lines that show its depth, and I suddenly believe this map of Tad's should include other people who've lived in the East End of Superior and sat together on stormy nights in kitchens, as well as the people on the Old Country map you see at the Warsaw Tavern. Such people are never far from us. Now Tad is making a place for himself on the map of memory. I am trying to, too, by thinking that in the forest among the storm's windfall of trees and branches this very All Soul's Eve, departed souls are waiting for another soul to depart—this one for Vietnam. Maybe it is storming in Old Country Poland, too. It is possible, I think, that the herb connects us—the herb, our history, and this old Polish language Thaddeus is trying to speak.

Now Ma tells *Pani* Pilsudski, "Don't worry. We'll get you home."

Helping her up, Mother hugs her so she knows she's okay. As Mrs. Pilsudski puts on her wool coat and boots, I throw on a jacket, push open the porch door against the storm.

Between our house and hers, two feet of snow drift over the sidewalk. On the nearby railroad trestle, a train passes quietly. When we've crossed the new contours, Mrs. Pilsudski thanks us, tells us she will say a rosary for us. "Arriba," she says. "Beat beat bongos."

"Arriba," we say. "Beat beat."

I figure Thaddeus will now return to his map; but he goes off—tossle cap, blue sunglasses, and uniform overcoat on—stumbling into the wind, maybe wanting to find a home, maybe wanting to find the Polish Club. "I'm doing fine," he's saying.

I lose sight of him in the storm and can't watch anymore. As I walk back in the house, I see Pa stumbling a little but know he'll be okay.

I page through the blue booklet Tad gave me. Sixteen pages in Polish, a language I am trying to study but now need Pa's help to read. "*Celem Towarzystwa Bratniej Pomocy in. Tadeusza Kościuszki. . . ,*" it starts, then goes, "*będzie skupienie pod swój sztander Polaków, ku wzajemnemu i moralnemu poparciu. . . .* Look-it. 'The Club's purpose is the gathering of Poles under their own standard for mutual and moral support,'" I say, reading in Polish after Pa how the Kosciuszko Club and Lodge is also for

> the fostering among club members of the feeling of love and brotherhood, for the defending of Polish honor, and finally for the furtherance of the principles and immortal deeds of one of Poland's greatest sons.

"It's a symbol," Pa says.

"You're drunk, Edda," Mother says.

"Drinking'll kill me," says my father.

"Go to bed, Andrew," Ma says as the telephone rings.

I answer it. Mr. and Mrs. Novazinski are both talking at once: "Andy! Your cousin says he wants to kiss our walls and floors while he's out trick-or-treating. He never wants to leave East End, he says. We gave him some candy, told him to get going. Call his house. Tell his parents the kid's crazy drunk."

Handing Ma the phone, I go upstairs. I stare at weeds. I read a little in a book. When people die in houses in the Old Country, it says, mirrors are turned in to face the wall, and windows are opened so the spirit isn't trapped inside the house.

Thinking no one has died tonight, I still turn my one mirror backward to the wall when the phone rings again.

It rings again later. It must be for Tad. Then my dad is in the next room getting ready for work.

"Hawkweed, Tansy, Goldenrod," I whisper to the weeds of my collection. Mirror turned, I quietly raise the window, then the storm window behind it to let out the spirits of the dead—or in Tad's case, the living. The warm air of spirits rushes out through the screen. I have followed the old custom.

Hearing Pa go downstairs, I stop whispering and think there is finally peace this night of souls, until a little while later I hear a pounding on the storm door. As I peer through the window into the swirling wind and snow, I see Thaddeus in uniform.

"It's me," he's saying, drunk, frightened. "It's Thaddeus. Remember where I stood on All Soul's Eve. Don't forget where I stood."

"You're no Kosciuszko, Tad," I say to him from my window.

"I know. I want to be. I want to win the war. I want to be a hero." He's holding open a paper bag. "See? This is a start. I got a bag full of candy. I can do great things if I set my mind to it."

Downstairs, the phone rings again. I hear Ma's voice through the furnace register. "Tad, it's people," I yell out to him. "They say you're kissing their houses, you're kissing their porches and steps . . . even their doors and mailboxes. Your folks are pretty angry. My pop sure is, with the phone ringing so much. Be careful out there, will ya, Tad? Don't drink no more. Don't go trick-or-treating no more."

"I won't," he says.

He kneels down to clear the snow with his hands. I see the earth he has discovered that he loves. I see this one dark spot in the world of white. He is kissing the center of the world.

When Pa steps outside on his way to the gas plant, crazy Tad, like he can't take his hands from the cold earth of northern Wisconsin, is working at the snow, saying, "I knelt here once. Remember me. Remember where I stood and knelt. Remember the earth I kissed just as winter came."

When Pa looks down, Tad says, "I'll show the Viet Cong something they'll never forget. Oo-la-la, war is hard."

Still stumbling from the *Żubrówka*, now Pa kicks at the snow to clear a little more away, as if this could keep Thaddeus in the East End forever. c

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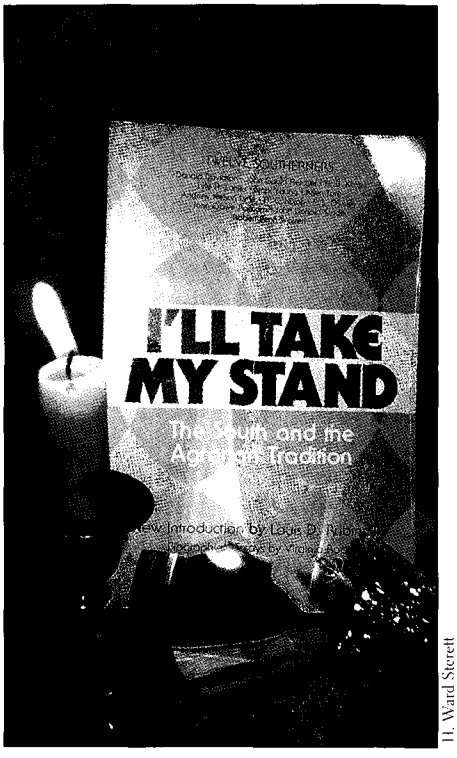
Our Fathers' Fields

by Clyde Wilson

"There are a large number, possibly a majority, of people who call themselves conservative. But the more they are examined, the less conservative they will appear."
G.K. Chesterton, *Outline of Sanity*

The Rebuke of History: The Southern Agrarians and American Conservative Thought
by Paul V. Murphy
Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press; 351 pp., $19.95



H. Ward Sterett

Chesterton, an English Catholic version of a Southern Agrarian, once remarked that Yankee tycoons (John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, J.P. Morgan) all had the same face—a face, he added, that any decent man would relish rearranging with a fist. Similarly, of American "liberal" academics, it can be said that they all have the same mind, to the extent that it is possible to predict what they will say before they say it. I have been testing this observation for 40 years and have a 100-percent success rate in proving it.

Thus, an academic becomes celebrated and distinguished when he can say the same thing in a different way, present the familiar tune in a new arrangement. This latest investigation into the Southern Agrarians who produced *I'll Take My Stand*, and their legacy and disciples, fits the bill. The author of the present doctoral dissertation has dug into the careers of such familiar second-generation Agrarians as Richard M. Weaver and M.E. Bradford, and also of the third generation, which includes the esteemed editor of this journal and other writers quite familiar to *Chronicles* readers. It is flattering, I suppose, that "the *Chronicles* group" should be taken seriously and regarded as moderately significant historical figures, except that Professor Murphy thinks of us more as laboratory specimens of deviancy than as serious thinkers. After all, you cannot easily predict what we will say before we say it.

When academics deal with the South, the pattern is even simpler and more predictable: For them, everything Southern is, by definition, evil and wrong. I know one historian who achieved celebrity with a biography showing a Civil War-era Southern spokesman to have been a rake and a misanthrope—hardly a real discovery, since his character has long been well known. QED: yet another fresh proof of the evilness of the South. The purveyors of this equation are never asked the simple question: "Evil as compared to *what*?" That a Southerner can be proved to be flawed damns the entire society. (It would be bad manners for me to bring up, say, the questionable character of such Northerners as General Hooker and Henry Ward Beecher, or to point to the quite extraordinary number of personally admirable characters who flourished in the South at the same time.) Ken Burns' notorious Civil War "documentary" is an extended exercise in this kind of thinking.

Obviously, something more is going on here than historical analysis. I am reminded of the brilliant intellectual who blamed Timothy McVeigh and the Unabomber on the "atmosphere of violence" created by the "Southern gun culture," though neither man had anything to do with either the South or guns. I am also reminded of the recent movie in which a Southern character (he has a battle-flag plate on his truck) beats his wife, other women, and children, is a fundamentalist but hates Jews, and practices voodoo but hates blacks. These are rituals of exorcism. The bottom line is that anything "American" is always good and wise and righteous, and no proof is needed. Anything bad that shows up in the 50 states must be "Southern."

I'll Take My Stand has always presented a problem for this type of "scholarship," partly on account of the literary eminence of some of the contributors, and also because the book has been attractive to considerable numbers of people over several generations. One response is to dismiss the volume as harmless metaphor, a literary exercise rather than the radical critique of American society that it is. Another is to bury it as hopelessly reactionary, nostalgic, and ir-

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relevant. Now, Professor Murphy has invented a new tune for the old song. Yes, he agrees, *I'll Take My Stand* really *was* an expression of radical conservatism. The trouble, he has discovered, is that the second and third generations of followers—and even some of the original Agrarians themselves—have abandoned or distorted the true Agrarian principles! Some of us have betrayed the radical critique of capitalism by becoming just regular "conservatives." Others have betrayed the universality of the teaching by becoming involved in what could be called "Southern identity politics."

Southerners cannot do anything right, it seems. If we seek allies, we are abandoning our best principles. If we remain purists, we are isolated and futile. If we try to adapt to radically altered circumstances, we are abandoning principle. (You see the game.) If we accommodate ourselves to the world that exists, we have again betrayed our principles, but if we make a practice of not shopping at chain stores, then we are simply figures of fun.

There are a number of things wrong with this approach. I do not know of any serious Agrarian who has converted to Buckleyite conservatism. True, some of us once thought we had allies among the *National Review* crowd, but these have long since learned that they were badly mistaken. If we had really sold out to the conservatives, your esteemed editor would be ensconced inside the Beltway, drawing a fat salary, and writing punditry for the *Wall Street Journal* and *National Review Online*. Besides, there is nothing in Agrarianism fundamentally incompatible with free markets and private property. What the Agrarians criticized was the gigantism, concentration, and abstraction of wealth. If we are not "radical conservatives," then what *can* we be?

Murphy can get away with this game only by carefully defining the Agrarian message to suit himself, while cautiously selecting the figures for his study. Thus, he claims that Donald Davidson and those who have followed him went astray in emphasizing the Southernness of the Agrarian message. But this is no deviation, as Murphy would have to admit if he had paid attention to Frank Owsley, Andrew Lytle, John Donald Wade, Stark Young, and John Gould Fletcher, rather than just Allen Tate and John Crowe Ransom. If he had acknowledged the full amplitude of *I'll Take My Stand*, he would have had to admit that it is rich enough to inspire many different movements. He might even—were he inclined to be generous—have concluded that identity politics was an unavoidable path for Southerners, the only pariah group of the multicultural American empire, and the only people who are required to disown themselves in order to be "good Americans" (unlike, say, Muslims, Trotskyite communists, and pederasts).

Professor Murphy, to give credit where credit is due, has done a good deal of research and covered things that have not been previously treated. He has grasped the significance of the early writings of "the *Chronicles* group" in *Why the South Will Survive* and *The New Right Papers*. However, his attempted intellectual biographies of Thomas Fleming and Samuel Francis, for instance, are journalistic—episodic and superficial. They do not achieve substantial or accurate accounts of the development of their ideas, much less of the relationship of such development to "American Conservative Thought" (which is never defined). One would never guess at the originality and power of these two thinkers and the followers and admirers they have found. Murphy wishes only to exorcise them in pigeonholes he has preselected, whether they fit or not.

In these larger things, *The Rebuke of History* does not, in my opinion, achieve a useful account of the Agrarian legacy. It sometimes goes astray on smaller things as well. The history of the Chapel Hill Conservative Club is garbled. On the vicious neoconservative attacks on M.E. Bradford and The Rockford Institute, Murphy is but a mouthpiece for the official neocon cover story, when what was most important about these events was their clandestine aspect. I find myself claiming that "the Southern way of life" transcended history and geography, when I wrote exactly the opposite.

The greatest flaw in Murphy's understanding of the Agrarian view has many precedents: namely, the way he makes Allen Tate the central intellectual figure of the movement. All detractors of the South love Tate for the same reason that all bad interpreters of the Constitution love James Madison—he was a lightweight thinker who can be molded into any shape desired.

Tate has been taken repeatedly as the definitive interpreter of Southern history. In fact, he was ignorant of history and, as far as I can tell, never did any primary research. He was a speculative theorist, proposing grand ideas that seemed plausible to many. His biography of Jefferson Davis, written in Paris without any significant sources, was yet presumed to be a profound critique of Confederate military strategy. The biography was nothing of the sort, nor did Tate know what he was talking about: It is the second-worst book written by any of the Twelve Southerners (the worst being Tate's silly, misconceived, and badly written novel, *The Fathers*).

Tate was fond of portraying the Old South as if it were the New, which he *did* know something about—as an enervated, incomplete regime, doomed to failure. In fact, the South of the 1850's, even in the older states, was a dynamic, productive, and optimistic society: How else could it have sustained four years of warfare against a much larger power? Despite Tate's theorizing, the Old South never was, never claimed to be, and never wanted to be "a feudal society."

Tate's most oft-cited theory is that the South failed because it lacked a coherent theological worldview. But the South had a unifying theology, if not an established church. Comparatively, the South has been, and still is, the most solidly Protestant Christian society in the world; that unity has sustained the region under the weight of suffering and preserved its uniqueness.

The Rebuke of History gives us a new, but essentially predictable, narrative of the Agrarian legacy. The author's considerable talents as an intellectual historian, nevertheless, do not result in a satisfactory work: Murphy offers no insight concerning the place and influence of Agrarianism in "American Conservative Thought." The problem may be, in part, that the intellectual battles in which it is involved are still being fought.

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Sit Down, Be Comfortable!

by Thomas Fleming

Crowd Culture: An Examination of the American Way of Life
by Bernard Iddings Bell, with an introduction by Cicero Bruce
Wilmington, DE: ISI Books; 136 pp., $19.95

◆

Which of our editors wrote this indictment of post-Christian America?

> More than a few of us begin to see that while wealth accumulates in these United States, man seems to decay. Corruption corrodes our political and industrial doings. In our private lives a pervading relativism, an absence of conviction about what is the good life, a willingness to seek the easy way rather than the way of integrity, blunts the prodding of conscience, takes the zest out of living, creates a general boredom. We are not a happy people; our alleged gaiety is not spontaneous. Our boredom results not only in a reluctant morality but in shockingly bad manners, which most of us do not even know are bad manners. We become increasingly truculent. Our way of life, while opulent and brash, is less and less conducive to peace of mind and security of soul.

This condemnation of American culture is not to be found in a *Chronicles* editorial written during the Clinton years, but in an essay of Bernard Iddings Bell published in 1952 as a chapter in his short but important book *Crowd Culture*, republished now by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute. Bell was that rarest of writers, an American "centric"; of course, by the American standards of shoddy vulgarity, he was entirely eccentric, but both by the purity of his prose and the integrity of his thought, Bell represented the central traditions of civilization.

Like Russell Kirk, whom he inspired, Bell was a Midwesterner: Born in Ohio in 1886, he attended the University of Chicago and served as vicar and dean of an Episcopal church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin, before becoming warden at St. Stephen's College in New York. By one of America's richest ironies, St. Stephen's was later transformed into Bard, an academic shrine to every anti-Christian leftist fantasy that has seduced the poor American republic.

If we are to believe solid movement conservatives—decent men like William Rusher—America, in the generation coming before and after the mid-20th century, was—despite the depredations of the New Deal—a pretty swell country, indeed. The criticisms of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, of the Southern Agrarians and Catholic Distributists, and of liberal individualists such as H.L. Mencken and Albert J. Nock, the mere fact of the thinness (and tawdriness) of American achievements in literature, philosophy, scholarship, and music—none of this was allowed to spoil the illusion that American civilization was a going concern down through the Eisenhower years until an assortment of malcontent beatniks, communists, and hippies took to burning their draft cards and interrupting professors.

Canon Bell, spending the last few years of his life in the Golden Age of Ike, had little sympathy for this very American habit of self-congratulation: "The chief threat to America," as he begins *Crowd Culture*,

> comes from within America. It comes from our prevailing self-admiration, from indisposition to listen to adverse criticism of our way of life, disinclination to see ourselves as we are, an unwillingness to confess our sins which has come dangerously near to being an inability to see that there are serious faults to admit and remedy. Most Americans regard an insistence on national self-criticism as traitorous or near to it. In consequence, our people as a whole have acquired a false optimism about the ability of our way of life to survive and flower.

If Canon Bell were alive today, he would be set down as a crank, a naysayer, one of those blame-America-first leftists masquerading as so-called paleoconservatives. Everybody knows, he would be told, that *true* conservatives believe in change. They are bullish on human nature and, rejecting outmoded theories of original sin, adopt a can-do approach to social problems. Our civilization, which provides shower stalls and frozen food even to the poor, has outdistanced all of its rivals and predecessors. "The whole cult of comfort," Bell responds, "is petty, ignoble, unworthy of human nature, absurd," and he wonders why so few people ask "whether it can possibly be that, since our primeval ancestors crawled from the slime of the sea, first the animal world and then the human race have struggled on, at cost of travail and pain and tears and death, merely that modern man may sit down and be comfortable."

The collapse of American education, both higher and lower, since the 1950's has been the subject of hundreds—perhaps thousands—of well-funded studies showing how a perfectly decent system was destroyed by ideologues and social experimenters. In 1952, Canon Bell was already decrying the stultifying effects of government bureaucracy upon public education, predicting that the generation growing up under such a system (he is talking about my generation, here, and the generation born in the early 30's) would be "incompetent for the most part to think and act intelligently and bravely in this difficult era, unable to understand themselves or their society, easily victimized by propaganda devices manipulated by the unscrupulous." Although Bell was happy to concede that the motives of those who established American public education were noble and democratic (they were neither), the revulsion from education, the refusal to inculcate decent manners, and the rejection of intellectual discipline did not begin in the 1950's. "American life," he writes, "in respect to manners, morals, character, ability to think clearly, has alarmingly deteriorated during the first half of this century."

Bell fervently hoped that, through education, a democratic elite class might emerge, capable of displaying those qualities that were necessary for the survival of America. He was wise enough to realize that, however much the fault of American degeneracy might be attributed to the ruling class, the people were themselves to blame. The schools could never save us, he concludes, "so long as most of the people, the taxpayers, the parents are satisfied with what is being done to and for and with the children."

Bell realized that the schools' greatest failure was in abandoning religion, but

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when he looked at the American churches of his day, he saw the same forces at work. There were, of course, people among the clergy and the laity who accepted and practiced "historic Christianity," but the liberals—whom he playfully called "neo-Christians"—were already, by 1952, in control. The brutality that results from de-Christianization was already apparent in the criminal record of the post-Christian regimes established by Nazis and communists, but Bell saw the same process at work in a nation whose government, working in tandem with the communists, was demolishing Korea. Only Christian love, he argued, could save America from the coming violence.

Leftists and progressives of the type that applaud editorials in the *New Republic* and the *Weekly Standard* can safely dismiss Canon Bell as an old fogy, a reactionary, a *Christian*. Christian and Jewish conservatives (and Bell was careful to note that Jewish degeneration paralleled that of Christians) have to deal with the reality that, for most of their lives, their country, beginning on a low level of moral civilization, has rapidly declined to the point that even Canon Bell might well pine for the Golden Age of Ike. The republication of *Crowd Culture* is a small but important sign that the ghost of Russell Kirk still haunts the minds of his disciples and prowls the corridors of the institutions he helped to create.

Thomas Fleming is the editor of Chronicles.

Why the West Has Won

by H.A. Scott Trask

Carnage and Culture: Landmark Battles in the Rise of Western Power
by Victor Davis Hanson
New York and London: Doubleday; 460 pp., $29.95

◆

One of the important lessons of Victor Davis Hanson's riveting new book, *Carnage and Culture*, is that the only civilization or culture that can defeat the West is the West. "In the long history of European military practice," Hanson writes, "it is almost a truism that the chief military worry of a Western army for the past 2,500 years was another Western army." In battles against non-Western powers, European armies have not only been victorious on most occasions but have inflicted horrendous casualties on their enemies while suffering relatively few of their own. By contrast, battles and wars fought *among* Westerners (the Peloponnesian War, the Thirty Years' War, the American War Between the States, World Wars I and II) have been bloodbaths, often with harmful demographic, political, and cultural consequences. Hanson's book is an exploration of why, for 2,500 years, Western armies and navies have achieved and maintained military and naval superiority over those of the East. He argues that European invincibility has resulted not from favorable geography, climate, resources, luck, or even genes, but from the unique Western military tradition—which is itself a natural product of the uniqueness and superiority of Western *culture*.

Hanson, a classical historian and author of *The Western Way of War* (1989) and *The Other Greeks* (1995), has selected nine representative battles fought by the West against various non-Western enemies that demonstrate why Western cultures have been able to field armies and navies capable of routing numerically superior and equally brave enemies on every continent on earth. Seven of these battles were Western victories. Of the other two, one was the catastrophic and horrific Roman defeat at Cannae (216 B.C.); the other, the tactical American victory against the Tet Offensive (1968), which was, nonetheless, a political disaster at home and ultimately led to American withdrawal from Southeast Asia. Three of the victories were fought in defense of the Western homeland—Salamis (480 B.C.), Poitiers (A.D. 732), and Lepanto (1571)—while five were fought to extend or preserve Western hegemony in various parts of the world: Gaugamela (331 B.C.), Tenochtitlan (A.D. 1520), Rorke's Drift (1879), Midway (1942), and Tet (1968).

Seven battles either overthrew a non-Western empire or ensured the survival of European civilization. The Athenian naval victory over the Persian fleet at Salamis saved Greece and, with it, Western civilization, then in its infancy. Alexander's crushing defeat of Darius at Gaugamela broke the back of the Persian empire and paved the way for the establishment of an Hellenic empire in the East. Charles Martel's bloody repulse of the Muslim Saracens at Poitiers saved not only France but Western Christendom itself and allowed a revitalized Western culture—a synthesis of classical civilization, Germano-Celtic culture, and Christianity—to continue its brilliant development. Hernando Cortes's annihilation of the Aztec army defending Tenochtitlan destroyed the largest and most magnificent city in the New World, overthrew an empire, and almost exterminated an entire nation. The Spanish and Italian sinking of the Turkish navy at Lepanto saved Christian Italy from Ottoman oppression and Islamic terror. And the brilliant American naval triumph at Midway mortally wounded the Japanese carrier arm by sending four of its finest flattops to the bottom of the Pacific in what proved to be the turning point of the war in the Pacific.

Except for Cannae—where the Roman legionaries outnumbered Hannibal's motley army of North Africans, Spanish Iberians, and Celtic Gauls—Western armies and navies decisively defeated numerically superior opponents, while inflicting horrendous and wildly disproportionate casualties on them. At Salamis, 300 Greek triremes, facing a naval force twice as numerous, sunk over 200 Persian warships and killed 40,000 of the enemy, while losing only 40 ships and a few hundred sailors and marines. At Gaugamela, Alexander's 47,000 Greeks routed a Persian army of 150,000, killing at least 50,000. At Rorke's Drift, 80 British riflemen, outnumbered 50 to one, killed 600 Zulu out of an attacking force of 4,000, while only losing 15 of their own. And in a little over a year of fighting at Tenochtitlan, 1,600 Spanish conquistadors and their Indian allies slew over 100,000 Aztec warriors, while losing 800 of their own men. These victories in the face of overwhelming odds were not unusual: Hanson could have written the same book based on nine different battles selected from the same time periods and featuring the same or similar antagonists.

How can we explain such sustained and consistent military triumphs over two-and-a-half millennia? *Carnage and Culture* attempts to answer this question definitively. Hanson easily refutes the assumption, common among academics, that Western ascendancy dates only to

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A.D. 1500 and was the consequence of the accidental invention of firearms. As his careful delineation and description of landmark battles dating to the Greco-Persian Wars in the fifth century B.C. makes clear, Western preeminence precedes the age of firearms by almost 2,000 years. Moreover, he demonstrates in his chapter on the eighth-century Frankish victory at Poitiers—as well as in his shorter discussions of the First Crusade (1096-1099) and the successful centuries-long Byzantine defense of Eastern Christendom against Islamic aggression—that Western superiority on the battlefield was maintained throughout the Middle Ages.

Hanson also makes the telling point that the superiority of Western weaponry was itself no accident but the result of a unique cultural tradition that sanctioned intellectual, political, and economic freedom. The Western cultural matrix of rationalism, free inquiry, the dissemination of knowledge, free markets, capitalism, private property, the sanctity of contracts, the freedom to profit, and the rule of law created an environment in which scientific discovery, application, and continual innovation were encouraged and rewarded. Even where non-Westerners were responsible for a crucial discovery or invention (such as the Chinese discovery of gunpowder), the Europeans ultimately benefited the most because their cultural traditions and institutions allowed for both the practical application and further development of such scientific breakthroughs. Western markets were capable of mass-producing the fruits (firearms, cannon, ships) of applied scientific engineering. As a result, at every battle studied by Hanson (with the exception of Midway, where the Japanese had better planes and torpedoes), Westerners were better armed and protected than their opponents. For the same reasons, Western logistics, a vital part of successful warfare, have consistently been superior to those of the East. Western overseas campaigns (Alexander's strike against Persia, the early Crusades, Cortes's daring invasion of Mexico, and the later European colonization of Asia and Africa) would have been inconceivable without sophisticated Western logistical abilities and resources.

Hanson points out that having superior or more numerous weapons was not in itself sufficient to guarantee battlefield victories for vastly outnumbered European armies. Without "the Western way of war," which Hanson defines as a preference for decisive shock battles of heavy infantry on land and vast fleets at sea, such technological advantages would have been far less lethal—and, indeed, inadequate for the projection of Western power across the globe. For example, it was not the mere possession of single-shot Martini-Henry rifles, but the training, discipline, and rapid sequential firing of the British garrison at Rorke's Drift that saved them from annihilation. Firing from behind a sturdy redoubt, their sustained volleys of deadly accurate rifle fire broke the Zulu charges and filled the ground with hundreds of dead and dying African warriors.

Hanson argues that a deadly and unique Western military tradition originated in the Greek city states between 800 and 500 B.C., was passed on to the Romans, and was adopted by the Germano-Celtic tribes of Northern Europe following the collapse of the Roman Empire in the West. The elements of this martial tradition were a preference for decisive shock battle, civic militarism, heavily armed infantry, well-protected warriors, tactical sophistication, discipline, and training. The Eastern way of war, by contrast, relied upon overwhelming numerical superiority, envelopment, surprise attack, cavalry, missile troops, and individual combat. Massed Western infantry formations with superior weapons and protective armor, when properly led and deployed, proved invincible against Eastern cavalry and greater manpower. The continuity between the Greek hoplite formation, the Macedonian phalanx, the Roman *maniples* (long, horizontal lines of shield-bearing infantry), the impenetrable "wall" of Frankish infantry at Poitiers, the ordered advance of the Spanish marines across the decks of the Turkish ships at Lepanto "in dense lines and columns," and the British infantry square is unmistakable.

By the term "civic militarism," Hanson means consensual government, civilian control and audit of the military, declarations of war by elected assemblies, and the practice of mustering free, propertied males to fill the ranks. The Greek hoplites were a landowning citizen militia. The Franks at Poitiers were propertied freemen. Eastern armies, by contrast, from the time of Xerxes to Saddam Hussein, have been composed of serfs, slaves, and mercenaries. Hanson believes that armies of freemen who are defending their own farms and liberties make better soldiers than those who are fighting for a distant ruling class or for an empire in which they are mere subjects who possess no rights. Not only have such freemen demonstrated a disciplined bravery (which Hanson defines as staying in rank despite battlefield adversity or overwhelming enemy numbers), they have exhibited an initiative and adaptability that has often proved decisive in hard-fought, evenly matched battles (e.g., Midway), qualities which, Hanson argues, are totally lacking in non-Western armies.

Inevitably, *Carnage and Culture* must anger American and European multiculturalists. On page after page of his book, Hanson contrasts the freedom, creativity, productive power, and martial prowess of Western culture with Eastern servitude, autocracy, sterility, and stagnation. His positive revisionist treatment of the Spanish conquistadors, coupled with his merciless depiction of the horrors of Aztec rule, will not be well received. He characterizes the conquistadors as both devout Christians and European rationalists who were not only well read in the latest developments of military science but in Western anthropological and comparative political science, which helped them study and search out weaknesses in the Aztec military and political structures. Their knowledge of engineering, metallurgy, and chemistry empowered them to construct portable wooden towers, movable bridges, gunpowder, metal bolts for their crossbows, and 13 prefabricated brigantines that proved crucial to the success of the final siege of the island fortress of Tenochtitlan. Hanson concludes that the "fanatical" Christians under Cortes were the heirs of "two millennia of abstract Western military science, from fortification, siegecraft, battle tactics, and cavalry maneuver to logistics, pike and sword fighting, and medical treatment in the field." By contrast, Hanson describes the Aztecs as mired in superstition, primitivism, and a form of barbarism whose demonic culture sanctioned human sacrifice, mass murder, cannibalism, sodomy, and transvestitism.

Hanson's three chapters devoted to the defense of the Western homeland from Eastern imperialism should be required reading for contemporary students who have been subjected to an endless tirade against alleged Western crimes and depredations committed against non-Europeans. Hanson argues that Eastern conquest—whether Persian, Arab, or Turk—would have meant serfdom, op-

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pressive taxation, female sexual slavery, and despotism, resulting in cultural sterility and economic stagnation. Islamic culture would have enriched Western life with forced religious conversions, the harem, and the wonderful institution of *devshirme*, under which the Turks kidnapped Christian youth from their conquered Balkan subjects, enslaved them for life, forcibly converted them to Islam, and then trained them to staff the army and bureaucracy of the Ottoman Empire. Knowing the cruel character of their Eastern enemies, the Greeks at Salamis, the Franks at Poitiers, and the Italians and Spanish at Lepanto took no prisoners and slaughtered those who begged for their lives after they were defeated. American multiculturalists would have granted them political asylum, resettled them at taxpayer expense among the victors, given them free health care and education, and permitted the Arabs and Ottoman rulers to pay for mosques for their former soldiers and sailors now residing in the West.

Hanson rejects the fashionable leftist doctrine that cultural diversity is a source of strength and unity. He describes Charles Martel's victory at Poitiers as significant because it stemmed the cruel tide of Islamic expansion northward, "marked a general continuance of the successful Western defense of Europe," and "inaugurated a near thousand-year struggle" between Christian Europe and the Islamic East, which he describes as two "antithetical cultures." "[T]he thousand-year-old cultural fault lines characteristic of the past Greco-Roman wars against the Achaemenids and Sassanids," he concludes, "reappeared in the Christian struggle against Islam."

The impressive erudition and incisive analysis of the author are not without their flaws, however. Hanson exaggerates the advantages of democracy and egalitarianism, while ignoring the social strength of free but aristocratic polities. For instance, in praising Athenian democracy, Hanson suggests that the more egalitarian and democratic a regime, the more formidable its military power. Yet it was aristocratic Sparta, not democratic Athens, that finally prevailed in the Peloponnesian War. Great Britain was a stronger military power and smarter in choosing its wars under a mixed government (democracy, aristocracy, and monarchy) in the 18th and 19th centuries than it was under its democratic parliamentary regimes of the 20th. British democracy bankrupted the country, lost the empire, and shed the best blood of the nation in ruinous and unnecessary wars. Despite being outgunned and outnumbered, the aristocratic American South almost won its independence from the more democratic North. Man for man, Confederate soldiers fought better, while Southern society proved far more cohesive and resilient than that of the North. Nazi Germany routed democratic-minded French and British armies on the western front in World War II, and the totalitarian Soviet Union, not Anglo-American democrats, ground down the German *Wehrmacht*.

Hanson also betrays many of the classicist's prejudices toward Northern Europe. For instance, he describes Vercingetorix, who united the Celtic tribes of Gaul in a desperate struggle to defend their lands and freedom against Roman imperialism, as a mere adventurer and his troops as mercenaries out for booty. He also fails to understand the ancient cultural and ethnic consanguinity between the Greco-Roman world and that of the Germano-Celtic north.

He does note that hundreds of years of Greek rule failed to Hellenize or Westernize the peoples of Western Asia, just as hundreds of years of Roman rule failed to Romanize or Westernize their North African or Middle Eastern populations. On the other hand, the Germanic and Celtic tribes of Northern Europe successfully absorbed the best of Greco-Roman culture even as they overran the western provinces of the empire. The historical model for the Arthurian legend was probably a Romanized Celt who led his fellow civilized Britons in battle against the invading Saxons. At Poitiers, the Germanic Franks were defending the legacy of classical culture at Poitiers as much as they were defending their own wives and daughters, farms and estates, villages and churches. Hanson also overlooks the important battle of Chalons (A.D. 451) at which a pan-European force of Romans, Visigoths, and Franks came together to defeat Attila's rampaging Huns. The distinction between "civilized" Roman and "barbaric" German meant little when Europe was assailed by a common Asiatic enemy.

Carnage and Culture errs in totally dismissing the ethnic dimension in military history and insisting on a determinism that is purely cultural. The ferocious resistance of the Aztecs, Zulus, and (in the 1940's) the Japanese, Russians, and Germans proves that armies can fight valiantly in defense of their homelands and peoples even when they do not enjoy a culture of freedom. Hanson does not address whether they will fight for such a culture when they are part of a large, diversified, and multiethnic empire. After all, *every one* of Hanson's landmark battles was won by a Western people that was more or less unified by a common racial identity and religious faith. Despite a reputation for diversity, U.S. forces in Vietnam were over 80 percent white. The ever-expanding diversity of the modern West has no historical parallel, save, perhaps, that of the Roman empire, a precedent that hardly seems auspicious or encouraging.

And so Victor Davis Hanson's cultural determinism causes him to omit massive Third World immigration from his list of possible threats to continuing Western military ascendancy. He apparently believes that non-European immigrants will be magically transformed into Westerners the moment they set foot on Western soil. As the appalling attacks of September 11 made clear, it could prove a fatal assumption. The next war in defense of the West may again be fought on Western ground.

H.A. Scott Trask, an American historian, is working on a book on Northern opposition to President Lincoln during the War Between the States.

Against the Horticulturalists

by John Lukacs

A Moral Temper:
The Letters of Dwight Macdonald
edited and introduced
by Michael Wreszin
Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Inc.;
483 pp., $35.00

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Dwight Macdonald died in December 1982, almost 20 years ago. I went up to New York for his funeral. There were few New York intellectuals, prominent or not, at that gathering—which, properly and decently, had something like a family atmosphere. He had

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been living in the very middle of New York, and, yes, he was ill and morose for some time; but the interest in him—indeed, the respect—had been largely abandoned by the younger set of public writers and other literati, including those whom he had helped years before. Into their intellectual and social categories, he did not fit. But 15 or more years later, his reputation (a word that he would dismiss, or even despise) has—no matter how slightly—risen. Another generation of thoughtful young people and serious readers, scattered across this vast country, includes men and women who respond to Macdonald's prose and respect him for the probity of his thinking. They must somehow sense that the outdated and corroding categories of "conservative" and "liberal" really do not (and did not) apply to him. Dwight Macdonald was a radical and a traditionalist—which, in our technological age, is no contradiction. "Traditionalist," even more than "radical," perhaps describes him best. That, I think, is the source of what I hope is his slowly growing appeal.

For much of this, Michael Wreszin may take credit. His serious biography of Macdonald (*A Rebel in Defense of Tradition*, 1994) did not receive the attention it deserved, in spite of the richness of its contents. (I was Macdonald's friend for 30 years and yet learned much about him from Wreszin's book.) Now we have his edition of a collection of Macdonald's letters (again with a very apposite title), which, I think, will be read by more and more people—assuming, that is, that they are made aware of its existence. Wreszin's selection is very good, and the first paragraph of his Introduction amounts to a masterful summary of what Macdonald was—and means:

> Dwight Macdonald's life story as revealed in his vast correspondence is the story of an American awakening. It is an account of an upper-middle-class white male, schooled in the elite institutions of the establishment, who started out with all the prejudices and provincialisms of his class. . . . and through the force of his inquiring mind managed to jettison a footlocker full of dandyish pretensions and become one of the most penetrating critics of politics, society, and culture in twentieth-century America.

His correspondence *was* vast, and there his problem resided. (*His* problem, not that of his biographer—Wreszin had a large job but selected and annotated well). There are great writers and thinkers whose letters are often as valuable as their books. (Tocqueville is one.) But Macdonald never wrote a large book; there are Macdonald books that are collections of essays, extraordinarily consistent and cohesive ones; also small books that are brilliant and profound—one about the Ford Foundation, another about Poe. Macdonald should have—and could have—written a great memoir, since he was in the midst of American intellectual life for nearly a half-century. It would have dwarfed, easily, the (at times unpleasant) memoirs of Alfred Kazin and Edmund Wilson. But he didn't—not because he couldn't, but because he convinced himself that he couldn't. For deep down (or even not so deep down), this strong-voiced, opinionated, and often convinced man suffered from a want of self-confidence. Whether his lack of self-discipline was both cause and effect of this other want, we will never know.

That is why Macdonald wrote those letters—thousands of them. And he (no lack of discipline here?) preserved them all; he made copies of almost every one, including his handwritten notes. (His mental strength, his probity, is somehow present even in his handwriting). A writer for the *New York Times Book Review* (in a poorly written notice prominently placed, appearing beneath a portrait of the author so badly drawn as to make him unrecognizable to those who knew him) suggested that Macdonald wrote these letters with an eye to posterity. Nothing could be further from the truth. He wrote them because (or, rather, when) he felt he could not, or did not want to, do any other writing. Yet, he had to write. That is why the letters are so valuable—and telling.

They show the man at his best. In 1956, he wrote Frank S. Meyer, then an editor at *National Review*:

> It's comic when an ultra-nationalist pro-private-enterprise-and-property-rights organ shows the same paranoiac defensism as a Marxist splinter group. (NR, of course, is isolated vis-à-vis the intellectuals, whom it is trying to reach, because it's on such a low level, and, also, granted, because the intellectuals are mostly liberal; but I'm not a liberal, in fact I'm getting to be more and more of a traditionalist, and it is just the crudity, dullness, and vulgarity of NR that makes me abhor it.)

Seventeen years earlier, Macdonald was a regular critic of Trotsky, who was supposed to have written or said that "Every man has a right to be stupid on occasion, but Comrade Macdonald abuses it." Wreszin notes that "Macdonald seemed proud of the attack and quoted it often. I think he made it up." (So do I.)

Macdonald had many faults. His problem with self-discipline was but one of them, though surely the source of not a few others. Though he seems—unlike most intellectuals—to have been seldom untrue to himself, we, of course, cannot tell. What we *can* tell is that Macdonald was a fierce visionary and hunter of untruths, including fashionable ones, that appeared in the speaking and writing of all kinds of people. The path to great truths that passes through a jungle of untruths did not really attract him. As an American, he did not (probably) quite agree that the pursuit of justice is inferior to the pursuit of truth; but he knew a flower from a weed, no matter what the accepted opinion of horticulturalists may have been. His comment on the Revised Standard Version of the Bible ("finding a parking lot where once a great cathedral had stood") is proof of that.

John Lukacs is the author of A Thread of Years *and* Five Days in London.

Bandwidth Blues

by Jeremy Lott

Rebel on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America
by Jesse Walker
New York: NYU Press;
326 pp., $24.95

◆

It is 1923, hot on the heels of the Progressive era and World War I. *Radio Broadcast* magazine confidently opines that the advent of radio as a popular medium "is destined, economically and politically, to bind us together more firmly." It might even produce "to some extent at least, unification of the religious

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ideas of the different creeds and cliques."

Come forward to 2002 and scan the local radio dial—AM and FM. A survey of the average metropolitan area will yield broadcasts in Spanish, Korean, and Russian; gardening shows; sports talk shows; Gregorian chants; country and new country; classical music; National Public Radio; soft rock, hard rock, jazz, blues, oldies, classic rock, and Christian rock; fundamentalist preachers railing against all rock music as a tool of the Devil; evangelical answer men telling listeners that they can't lose their salvation; Jewish geologists admonishing callers to sober up and take responsibility for their pitiful lives; call-in sex-advice shows; and outraged Republicans and libertarians whipping their listeners into a froth over Democrats, moral outrages, and Big Brother.

Rather than unity, homogeneity, and equality, radio has fostered a different set of impulses: the drives to specialize, separate, and splinter. In times of crisis, radio can disseminate needed information and direct resources, but normally it allows for an increasingly eclectic people to accommodate their varied tastes and beliefs.

Reason magazine editor Jesse Walker (full disclosure: I briefly worked with him when he was editing the *Citings* section) is an idealist, albeit of a left-libertarian bent. Throughout *Rebels on the Air: An Alternative History of Radio in America*, Walker surveys the current state of radio and finds it wanting. For all the variety, he explains, certain policies have "decimated the radio dial": "Most radio today is boring and homogenous, chains of clones controlled by an ever-dwindling handful of focus-group-driven corporations."

In the hands of a less competent writer, the anti-corporate streak might begin to grate. Like the poor, corporations we will always have with us. If big business has given us the wide variety of choices described above, then where is the harm? The book veers from descending into a tortured anti-corporate polemic because Walker is not merely an idealist; he is also a good reporter and historian.

The narrative parts of *Rebel on the Air* are not a formal history of the discovery of radio but of what people *did* with that discovery. In the early 20th century, "the amateur operators . . . took the new technology in hand and, armed with cheap crystal detectors, formed a new community in the ether." These "hams"—predominantly teenage or preteen boys with a technical itch—set up in barns, homes, and odd locations and used scraps to extend the reach of their signals. Geek contacted geek and, human nature being what it is, began to network. They traded technical tips and gossipy news, established rough protocols, and created a new cliché: the virtual community.

It was a cohort with teeth. Though many of the participants did not have their full set of adult molars, Walker credits the lobbying efforts of the hams for the defeat of Sen. Chauncey Depew's Wireless Bill of 1910, an attempt to seize control of the burgeoning airwaves. In the same year, if commercial operators wanted to use a particular part of the then-limited spectrum, it was necessary to request that the local amateurs refrain for a bit. If the request was not polite, "often the reply would be, 'Who the hell are you?' or 'I've as much right to the air as you have.'" The hams' rivalry with the Navy was legendary, with the two competing to find and relay rescue messages—and the hams often won.

Then came World War I and the total and dictatorial nationalization of the airwaves. However, the Navy quickly learned what commercial operations were beginning to discover as well: The only way it could maintain radio communications was by hiring the previously hated hams *en masse*. This guaranteed the survival of the hams after the war, even in the increasingly regulated radio environment.

During and after World War I, Congress passed restrictions, mostly to find them ignored. Hams were theoretically required to be licensed, but the requirement was often conveniently forgotten, and the Department of Commerce could not afford to enforce it. The military, realizing that it could not have functioned without the goodwill of these amateurs, harrumphed a bit and relaxed its position that every last bit of spectrum should be controlled by the government.

Because of this relaxation, the postwar years saw a boom in radio. Interactive radio was curbed, but the regulations of the 1920's were light enough that anybody could set up a formal radio station and play (or say) whatever he wanted. Most hams decided that they could make a bigger dent by starting their own radio stations or trading on their technical know-how for others.

The resulting proliferation rubbed some large players, such as RCA, the wrong way, since it undercut their bottom lines; they lobbied the government to curb the number of stations. Enter Herbert Hoover: Rather than let private individuals and the courts decide how to allocate the ether, the future president first created a crisis by abolishing, in effect, any legal claims to broadcast rights. The remedy for this "crisis" was the Federal Radio Commission—forerunner to the FCC—in 1927.

Thus, in Jesse Walker's anti-corporate parlance, Big Radio jumped into bed with the U.S. government to try to edge out small competitors and reinforce market positions—an arrangement that, as Walker makes amply clear, persists to this day. The FCC, which is nothing more than the lengthened shadow of Herbert Hoover, continues to treat the airwaves like its very own box of toys. As a result, the price of getting into radio has become both prohibitive and stifling: By the 1990's, a single company was allowed to own most of the stations in a given locality. Many of the unlicensed broadcasters—"pirates" in FCC-speak—are shut down not because they are interfering with other stations' signals, but because they threaten the bottom lines of Big Radio.

All of this leads Walker to decry the unholy alliance between Big Radio and Big Government, which he claims is ruining radio today, and call for the FCC to be abolished. Only then, he says, will radio realize its potential. He may have a point. Still, is modern radio really all that bad? As my slapdash list above is meant to indicate, radio is packed with such a wide variety of choices that any ham transported from the 1920's would be struck dumb with amazement. Put another way: How did a group of thoughtless, heartless corporations manage to produce something so diverse?

The answer is concealed in the book's title. In each generation, rebels find new ways—legal or otherwise—of reinventing the wheel, doing new and interesting things with radio that haven't been done before. Corporate radio stations, eager to make a buck, steal the idea even as they seek to kill the messenger. That may drive the idealists wild, but it does get the job done.

Jeremy Lott is senior editor of Spintech Magazine.

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by Samuel Francis

The Tyrant's Lobby

As American wars go, President Bush's crusade—excuse me, campaign—against terrorism doesn't really make the big leagues. So far, American military action in Afghanistan is not even comparable to the Gulf War of 1990-91, and put next to the Civil War, World War I, or World War II, the current adventure barely registers. That doesn't mean, however, that the war business is not proving useful to those ever on the alert to stamp out constitutional freedoms and those dissidents who exercise and enjoy them.

Almost from the very moment of last year's terrorist attacks, an endless parade of experts, non-experts, wannabe experts, and used-to-be experts have strutted forth on TV, radio, and in the opinion pages of newspapers to explain to Americans how they are going to have to accustom themselves to less liberty; how they had better not complain about standing in line at airports for two hours or more and having their toenail clippers and bottle openers pocketed by an avaricious, largely untrained, and manifestly incompetent security staff; and how we all have to start pulling together to root out the terrorists amongst us. Of course, as a result of the crackpot immigration policies of the federal government for the last three decades, there are, in fact, terrorists amongst us, and the Justice Department eventually admitted that there are some 250,000 aliens in the United States whom it wishes to question about their possible role in terrorism, but is unable to locate.

Yet, even as various political leaders and public figures told us to shut up, sit down, and prepare for our forthcoming servitude calmly, neither the government nor the experts (for the most part) expressed the least discomfort with official immigration policies or the vast hordes of immigrants, many from Arabic lands, that have flooded the country. As I noted in "Enemies Within and Above" (*Principalities & Powers*, December 2001), as far as the American ruling class is concerned, the Constitution is expendable, but immigration and the multicultural and multiracial checkerboard it creates remain sacrosanct, unquestionable, and untouchable.

Just how expendable constitutional freedoms are soon became clear. Within a month of the terrorist attacks, the Congress passed and the President signed a bill vastly expanding the powers of the federal government to spy, investigate, surveil, and wiretap, to the point that civil libertarian Nat Hentoff wrote that the new law represented "the worst attack on the Bill of Rights since World War II." For a gentleman of Mr. Hentoff's persuasion, that's saying something, since it means the current law is worse than Joe McCarthy, J. Edgar Hoover, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and Richard Nixon. Mr. Hentoff is a zealous (and largely consistent) defender of liberty, and perhaps he has overstated the case—but not by much. As Jeffrey Rosen explained in the *New Republic*,

> If your colleague [unknown to you] is a target of a Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act investigation, the government could tap all your [own] communications on a shared phone, work computer or a public library terminal.

There really are terrorists inside the country and others outside who would like to get inside, and it makes sense to allow federal police and intelligence services a certain amount of elbow room in tracking them down. But there is every indication that the elbow room, like a space warp in a science-fiction story, will quickly balloon into a vast and uncharted universe of its own.

By the time of the anthrax attacks of last October, some in the tyranny lobby were actually banging the drum for what could only be called an undisguised police state. A popular historian named Jay Winik published in the *Wall Street Journal* (October 23) a long piece entitled "Security Comes Before Liberty," in which he expounded the glorious precedents of Abraham Lincoln, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt in suspending civil liberties during the various "national emergencies" that their own policies helped to manufacture. Mr. Winik began his little rationalization of despotism with a glowing account of

the torture of a suspected terrorist by Philippine police for several weeks in 1995. The terrorist eventually belched up information that prevented an attack similar to those later committed on the World Trade Centers, and Mr. Winik made it entirely clear that the procedures employed by American police are woefully and regrettably backward compared to the more sophisticated techniques of their Filipino colleagues.

The piece was mainly a theoretical manifesto to show that police statism is as American as, well, Lincoln, Wilson, and Ole Moosejaw himself. The real case for torture was advanced when the *Washington Post* ran a story about how some federal authorities, dismayed by the refusal of various terrorist suspects to spew their secrets voluntarily, are now pondering "alternative strategies." "Among the alternative strategies under discussion," the *Post* reported without cracking a smirk,

> are using drugs or pressure tactics, such as those employed occasionally by Israeli interrogators, to extract information. Another idea is extraditing the suspects to allied countries where security services sometimes employ threats to family members or resort to torture.

The article quoted one unnamed (for obvious reasons) FBI agent as saying, "But it could get to that spot where we could go to pressure . . . where we won't have a choice, and we are probably getting there." I agree; we probably are.

By the week after this report, who should start bolstering the case for the outright legalization of torture but that icon of progress and liberty, Harvard law professor Alan Dershowitz. Speaking in St. Louis, the hero of a thousand courtroom crusades—excuse me, campaigns—

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for the "underdog" spoke up for the legalization of dousing the underdog with gasoline and setting it on fire. "Even torture may not be off the table as an information-gathering tool, Dershowitz said," according to the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* (November 5). "But there must be a national debate about the circumstances in which torture is permissible and who should have the power to decide when to use it." Right-o. We wouldn't want to lurch into torturing anyone for just any reason at all, would we? How fortunate we are to have such apostles of constitutional law as Mr. Dershowitz around to tell us how to do it and who gets to authorize it.

As to who some of the guests in the nation's new torture chambers might be, don't bet your box-cutters that they will only be Arabs and Muslims. Almost from the beginning of the war on terrorism, there was a steady and increasingly loud hum about right-wing "hate groups" and their exact relationship to the attacks. It may not have been entirely a coincidence that, the very week after the antiterrorism bill passed into law, the FBI, while acknowledging that it had no idea who was sending out anthrax-laced envelopes, hazarded the guess (it was nothing more) that it might be the work of "hate groups." There was and is no more evidence for that theory than for the idea that the germs were being sent by the Girl Scouts—or for that matter by such violent groups as the Jewish Defense League, the Animal Liberation Front, and various environmental terrorist groups—but it was the "hate groups" of the right that got their names smeared across the headlines.

"Hate groups," of course, now include not just truly violent or hateful groups but nearly every organization that defends the Confederate flag, advocates a halt to mass immigration, supports the Second Amendment, denounces homosexuality as a sin, or expresses militant opposition to abortion, and some of the witch-hunting phonies who pose as "experts" on "hate groups" even try to rope in such leaders of the "religious right" as Pat Robertson and Gary Bauer. As it turned out, however, the line on "hate groups" and their supposed connection to recent terrorism was as confused and without substance as the concept of the "hate group" itself. Last September, Newhouse News Service released a story titled "America's racist-right fringe groups laud terror attack," in what was an obvious and rather hamhanded effort to "link" the "haters" with those who really did commit terror. One of the few "hate group leaders" who expressed any sympathy for the September 11 attacks was a sad chap in a place named Ulysses, Pennsylvania, who ranted cheerfully about "Satan's children, called Jews" and expressed the hope that "the World Trade Center burn to the ground." Even on the thither frontiers of politics, however, such sentiments were hard to come by, but that did not stop federal authorities from blithely speculating on their responsibility for the anthrax-laced mail or the mainstream media from smearing them with some connection, however vague, with September 11. Eventually, unable to produce any evidence whatsoever of serious "hate group" sympathy for or involvement in terrorism, the witch hunters began to change the official line. On November 10, the *Washington Post* reported that, so far from expressing sympathy for the September 11 attacks,

> some [hate] groups are using the events as a recruiting tool. White supremacy groups have used images of the burning World Trade Center towers on fliers as a way to argue that the United States should close its borders to new residents.

At the same time, Mark Potok of the Southern Poverty Law Center admitted that it was doubtful that "neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan or domestic militia organizations" were behind the anthrax campaign. "We have leaned toward a foreign explanation or a madman with a microbiology degree," Mr. Potok solemnly pronounced, as though he had any grounds or qualifications at all for "leaning toward" any explanation whatsoever.

Nevertheless, if one subtext of the aftermath of September 11 was that the Constitution is expendable, another was that, while foreign terrorism might now be a problem, the real enemy remains "white racism" and "hate," and even if no evidence of "hate group" involvement was immediately available, mechanisms were being developed that made real evidence perhaps not so necessary after all.

The possibility of outright torture was one such mechanism, but another popped up when Attorney General John Ashcroft suddenly announced that the Justice Department would now monitor conversations between attorneys and their clients in terrorism cases. A grotesque and blatant violation of longstanding criminal procedure and constitutional law, the decision produced a few squeaks from the administration's Democratic opponents but no serious opposition. A few days later, no doubt emboldened by the silence, the administration announced that it was authorizing secret military tribunals for foreigners charged with "terrorism" either in the United States or abroad (in places like Afghanistan). The new procedures were justified as necessary to protect the jurors from reprisals, and the President himself explained that it simply is "not practicable" to require the tribunals to operate in accordance with "the principles of law and the rules of evidence" that pertain in real criminal trials. Of course, we have held trials of terrorists before without their comrades murdering the jurors or paralyzing the government, and there's no reason to think we cannot continue to do so. The real reason for the secret trials is probably that the government simply lacks the evidence to convict a good many suspects whose involvement in illegal activities is by no means provable under established rules of evidence and procedure; therefore, we change the rules of evidence and procedure in order to throw them in jail or drag them in front of a firing squad.

Admittedly, most of the extraordinary measures so far adopted or proposed are directed against foreign terrorists, not Americans, but having demonized law-abiding and nonviolent dissidents on the political right as members of "hate groups," the government and its extensions and allies in the ruling class may well find it expedient to use the "precedents" of the Bush administration to justify locking up or silencing political forces that have nothing to do with terrorism but a great deal to do with defending the right to keep and bear arms, resisting the New World Order, protecting national sovereignty, opposing immigration, or upholding traditional cultural symbols and icons. In the minds of the ruling class, there is little practical and virtually no moral difference between American militias and similar groups on the unreconstructed right, on the one hand, and the Islamic mass murderers of Al Qaeda, on the other. There is, quite literally, no telling what the ruling class will do or how far its greed for power will reach once it has liberated its mind and conscience—as well as its actual policies—from whatever constitutional and legal restraints it has so far been unable to shatter.

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by Scott P. Richert

There Goes the Neighborhood

The first time I drove to Rockford, on a cold, gray, slushy November day six years ago, I entered the city the way most people do. Heading west on I-90, I got off at the East State Street exit, where I was greeted by a horrifying metal sign, in muted oranges, purples, and greens, welcoming me to Rockford. As I headed west on State Street, every big-box store and chain restaurant known to man rose up before me, starting with the granddaddy of them all: Wal-Mart. My spirits sank as I drove along, and I seriously considered turning around and going home to Michigan. Still, as I went farther west, I noticed that there seemed to be more local businesses in older buildings.

Then I hit Fairview Avenue. Sitting at the light at Fairview and State, I could see a gentle, wooded hill rising before me, leading into a 1950's to 60's era neighborhood. As the light changed and I continued west, the years melted away: the 60's, the 50's, the 40's, a bit of the 30's, and then the 20's. A wonderful progression of architectural styles stretched along East State. This, I decided, was indeed a place I could live.

As I entered the heart of the East State Street residential district, I topped a hill and came to a stop at the light at State and Welty. A spectacular old two-story white mansion sat on the south side of the street, with two low wings and a vast lawn. I remember thinking, *I wonder who lives there?*

As of Monday, December 17, 2001, I know the answer. That is the night that the Rockford City Council voted to approve a special-use permit to allow Rosecrance Health Networks to use the house as a "recovery home for young adolescent women between the ages of 14-18, not to exceed 12 residents plus staff in an R-1, Single-Family Residential Zoning District." Rosecrance will now purchase the house for $299,000 (an enormous sum in the depressed Rockford housing market) from the current owner, who has left it vacant since inheriting it about a year and a half ago. The house has only been on the market for about nine months, not very long for a house of its size and price in Rockford. After equipping the house with a sprinkler system, exit signs, and a new furnace—which Rosecrance head Phil Eaton estimates will take three to four months—Rosecrance will begin moving girls from its current halfway house on North Main Street, two blocks up from the offices of *Chronicles*.

Six months after we moved to Rockford, my wife and I bought a home on East State, six blocks west of Rosecrance's new halfway mansion. Although we knew at the time that our neighborhood is what is politely called "marginal," we wanted to live in an actual neighborhood, with real neighbors. During the first two years in our home (which was built in 1921), we watched the area, especially southeast of us, decline fairly dramatically. Up to half of the houses on some blocks are rental units owned by absentee landlords, and an increasing number of drug dealers and prostitutes had begun to call our neighborhood home.

Then, three years ago, Gay Campbell—a tall, thin, tough blonde who was tired of getting the runaround when she called the Rockford police—decided to form the Highland Neighborhood Association. About 100 angry people showed up for the first meeting at Bethesda Covenant Church. Since then, the Highland Neighborhood Association has become one of the most active neighborhood organizations in Rockford, and—through neighborhood watch (and occasional patrols), cleanup days, landscaping parties, and constant pressure on absentee landlords, the Rockford police, and Rockford city government—it has turned our neighborhood around.

One of the chief goals of the Highland Neighborhood Association has been to maintain the residential character of the neighborhood, particularly of East State. We do have some businesses scattered among the houses, but they are small, low-traffic establishments that complement the character of the neighborhood. (Our family dentist, for instance, has his office in his house just across the street from us.) And so it should have come as no surprise to anyone when the Highland Neighborhood Association gathered over 1,000 signatures—over 80 percent from a six-block radius around the house—opposing Rosecrance's request for a special-use permit. As Gay Campbell argued, having commercial or non-family residential houses in the neighborhood "is not the same feeling. When you buy your home, you want to have neighbors."

Phil Eaton did his best to tar those of us who opposed the halfway house, claiming that "this a suitable area, and I reject profiling of any form." In the end, of course, he need not have worried. Despite the aldermen's insistence that they want the Highland Neighborhood Association to be very active and to provide them with input on issues affecting our neighborhood, the vote to approve the special-use permit was ten to three.

After the council vote, I asked Phil Eaton what his plans were for the halfway house on North Main, once Rosecrance moved the girls over into my neighborhood. He replied that he was "not sure what our future is for the North Main house." Still, he said with a smirk, "Before any plans are finalized, we fully intend to have the Signal Hill Neighborhood Association involved." I did not have to ask why he would seek input from Signal Hill after ignoring the wishes of the Highland Neighborhood Association. The president of Signal Hill, you see, is former Democratic Mayor John McNamara. Currently president of William Charles Investments, the real-estate development arm of local public contractor Rockford Blacktop, McNamara serves on the board of Rosecrance.

As Frank Schier, the editor and publisher of *The Rock River Times* (Rockford's weekly newspaper), commented, "The council's vote proves that, in Rockford, democracy is a farce. We don't have a say in our own neighborhoods. Here, the oligarchy and special interests rule. Unfortunately, I am coming to believe that Rockford truly is a mirror of the nation."

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Letter From the Countryside

by Mary Berry Smith

Real Homeland Security

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I was picking tomatoes on our small farm in north-central Kentucky when I heard the news of the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. It took me some time before I understood that what Bob Edwards of National Public Radio was talking about was not a book or movie. I was horrified and frightened when I realized what he was describing was real, but I wasn't surprised. It seems that I live waiting for the next awful thing to happen somewhere in the world.

Our farm sits near a small town in a world made up mostly of small places—places affected by the policies of their governments but seldom consulted or considered. This place has been my "homeland" all of my life, and my family's for eight generations. The government that now wants to talk about "homeland security," an obnoxious phrase, has been working at economically destroying our homeland for a good deal of that time.

Because we now know what we should have known all along—that we are vulnerable to terrorist attack—maybe we are ready to think about what a secure homeland might really mean and how country places like ours might fit into it.

In a *New York Times* article dated October 28, 2001, Neil Harl, a professor of agriculture and economics at Iowa State University, says that "The terrorists know that the surest way to bring a country to its knees is to attack the food system and water systems." The problem, the article goes on to say, is that "the food chain is nearly impossible to secure fully because of its massive scale." People should have been plenty worried about this before September 11, and they should be asking to hear some serious talk about it now. I'm asking, and I have been for 20 years. All I've heard from our leaders, elected and otherwise, is talk of hiring more food inspectors. This is ridiculous for many reasons, not the least of which is that the food inspection system is currently failing to find manure on meat, some of which can be seen with the naked eye.

Our country, through its ruinous desire for cheap food, has nearly destroyed the safest food system we could have: farmers feeding the people closest to them. Our current farm policy permits mergers, allows for concentration, favors agribusiness, and teaches that small farms can't survive, while subsidizing large farms with what amounts to welfare payments. These policies ruin the market for small, independent producers who want fair prices, not welfare. And so what has happened to America's small farmers has not been inevitable; it has been the result of policy.

The further loss of small farms is not inevitable, either. My uncle John M. Berry, a farmer and a lawyer, says that we must keep bringing these things up because we're talking about the next generation's ability to eat. He says politicians won't take up these questions because there is another election between now and then.

Which brings me back to picking tomatoes on the morning of September 11. When my husband and I bought our farm in 1981, we thought of ourselves as conventional farmers. We had a dairy, raised corn and hay to feed the dairy cows, and raised tobacco. Over the next six or seven years, it became clear that what we were doing didn't make any sense. We were working ourselves and the farm to death. And so we began a change that is ongoing. We began to ask ourselves some questions that we hadn't thought of before:

How does our place look?

Is the soil on our farm improving?

Are we keeping the areas of our farm that we're not farming, such as waterways and woodlands, healthy?

Are we including our neighborhood in our decisions about what we do here?

Are we doing something that we would be glad, and proud, to pass on to our children?

Of course, economics must be considered, and it is. My husband and I, with the help of our three daughters, raise and process pastured poultry (chickens and turkeys), and raise organic vegetables and organic beef. For the most part, we sell products directly to our customers. There is no one in the middle, and trust ensures safety and quality. Our customers trust us to provide delicious, healthy, safe food; we trust them to pay us a fair price. Along the way, many of our customers have become our friends, which is certainly an added pleasure.

Can we imagine a community, a city, a state, a nation, and finally a world running on this kind of *real* economy? Can we imagine little places like ours as an integral part of a secure homeland? In these days of fear and foreboding, can we not see a better way? After all, what do we need to be secure? Certainly not instructions from our President that patriotism means buying more useless stuff to keep a false economy going.

We need clean food, water, and air. We need decent places to live: healthy cities and a prosperous countryside. That would be real homeland security—and a homeland worth fighting for.

Mary Berry Smith lives and farms in New Castle, Kentucky.

Letter From Venice

by Andrei Navrozov

Hot, Cold, and Tepid

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The only substantive change to my character that I have observed over time is in the workings of the spleen, the abdominal organ once regarded as the seat of what are now called the negative emotions. When I was young, the objects of my hate were precious few, though, of course, I used to fulminate against them at the top of my voice; nowadays, I seem to loathe just about everybody and every-

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thing, while saying little or nothing about it. This must be why we tend to imagine death as a kind of engulfing stillness, because, by the time it comes, we have grown to despise the world so perfectly and completely that silent rage is the only commentary really suited to the occasion. Sometimes I think that, if everybody's spleens functioned as well as mine, running like trains under Mussolini, we would all be living and dying in a more enlightened Christian way.

Overheard in Piazza S. Marco the other evening, as the band in the middle distance, probably Florian's, let flow the tears for the vanquished in "The Hills of Manchuria," a microwave-quick female voice from a group of married couples, walking back to their hotel in Riva degli Schiavoni after a day of sightseeing: "Moe, Curly, and wass dee udder'n?" The creakier voice of a somewhat older woman, waddling excitedly beside the life of the party: "Leh-ah-rrry!"

The life of the party, flirtatiously, to the three men dragging their feet behind them: "Larry, Curly, and Moe!" Provocative laughter from the three women. A man's voice in stern rebuke: "Now *don't start*, Maryann."

An issue of *Time* magazine opened at random, while in a doctor's waiting room, to an article headlined "Putin's Bold Move": "Joining the West in its war on terrorism was the easy part. Now can he keep the generals happy and safeguard his country's backyard?" *By Maryann Bird.* Could this be the same woman I overheard in Piazza S. Marco? She quotes a Russian source: "'It's not NATO that now expands to the east,' writes Leonid Radzikhovski, a columnist for the weekly magazine *Itogi*. 'It's Russia that is drastically expanding to the west.'" To anybody with eyes, the point made in *Itogi* would seem as plain as Larry, Curly, and Moe; here, however, is how Maryann extrapolates it:

> Directly or indirectly, Russia and the West may begin to sort out a broad range of issues: the expansion of NATO, the proposed U.S. national missile defense system, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, nuclear weapons capabilities, Russia's bid for membership in the World Trade Organization, debt repayments to Paris Club creditors and greater Western understanding regarding Russian tactics in Chechnya.

Maryann I and Maryann II, two peas in a pod, two housewives on a rampage, two faces of one and the same uniquely Western creature. Truth to tell, if I felt totally free to vent my gloriously healthy spleen just now, I would be asking unanswerable questions like *Who allowed people like that into S. Marco?* or *Who will answer for the decision to fill reputable journals with housewifely twaddle?* With a twinge of something like remorse, I realize that such questions are not merely splenetic or rude; they sound elitist and even authoritarian. Alas, culture—in particular, the culture that democratic governments, their intelligence services, and their defense establishments lack so laughably—is more in tune with the workings of my spleen and other abdominal organs than with the editorial selection process at *Time* or the CIA's recruitment procedures. The proof of this assertion is that World War III—the tepid war that, in all likelihood, will be won by Russia without a single shot being fired by a Russian hand—has in effect already been lost, before it ever began, by cheeky, flirty, and fat Maryann I; by important, Ivy-League-educated, and voluble Maryann II; and by a myriad other Maryanns whose different virtues and vices are less specific than the one characteristic that they have in common, namely, their uniquely Western philistinism.

It is a quality easy to decry, but difficult to describe, although the first thing that springs to mind is the voice. It is always there, the Scourge of Air, as Catherine the Great of Russia called the tongue, raised above the music in the piazza and poised to slash the evening mist to ribbons. It is always there, the penchant for expressing what magazine editors call "opinion," rooted as it may be in 20th-century America's inability to discriminate between diversity and obesity, conservatism and conformity, originality and hooliganism, idleness and uselessness, intelligence and education, art and spectacle, knowledge and information. It is always there no matter where you go, because housewifeliness, though originally a branded product of American prosperity, is now the globally audible soul of a more and more meaningless West.

Once, many years ago, in a restaurant called the Gay Hussar in London, I was given the famous Hungarian cold cherry soup. Ever since then, whenever some Mittel-European subject is broached, deep within myself I detect the impulse (which, of course, I have the sense to suppress immediately), to work the cold cherry soup into the conversation. And the reason I have not once mentioned that very odd dish, in all those years of convivial Mittel-Europa banter since I tasted it, is the stage whisper from my cultural conscience to the effect that I know nothing about it. That is to say, I don't know how it's made, when it's eaten, who eats and who doesn't eat it in its native land, and, indeed, whether there's such a thing as *hot* cherry soup.

The housewives who are losing World War III for democracy have no comparable restraining mechanism in place. They have no cultural conscience, and this characteristically 20th-century American defect—which, consistent to the last, I would compare with the fatal atrophying of a vital bodily organ such as the spleen—permits them to be as free and easy, as stupid and trivial, as audacious and mendacious as the newspapers they read or write in, as the political leaders they work for or want to impeach, as the teachers in their children's schools, and as the children themselves. From anthrax to Andropov, from computers to nuclear weapons, from peace treaties to Louis XIV, from the Venice Biennale to hot and cold cherry soup, they have an opinion about everything. If you disagree, just take a look at the *New York Times* one Sunday.

Throughout this tepid war, as I monitor the vital signs of Western political and cultural opinion—television commentators, government spokesmen, newspaper pundits, university experts—I am reminded of a wealthy Frenchwoman of my acquaintance who has married an artist because he *looks* artistic. I am reminded of the American book reviewer, who does not know what a poem is but always seems to know what the poem is *like*, and hardly bothers to conceal her childlike delight at the prospect of using her thousand words to tell the readers how to read it. I am reminded of the English waitress, who has certainly never seen a cappuccino in her life, but will place the scalding cup of brown cinnamon-scented dishwater in front of you with the aplomb of Phileas Fogg. And, saddest of all because this is where I now live, I am reminded of the Italian resort hotel manager, demonstrating her newly installed swimming pool, which is the size of a Palm Beach bathing cap with yellow daisies, and insisting that I agree with her that it's American.

If the remarkable fact that it is women's

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voices that I hear in my head when I think of the housewives who now govern the West—anatomically male, many of them—should appear shockingly misogynist, do not blame any of my bodily organs. It is just that, in times of crisis, such as war, pestilence, or famine, every society stands or falls by the way it chooses to deal with its share of babbling Maryanns, be they its Kerenskys, its Chamberlains, its McNamaras or Kissingers. Male, female, or neuter, these are the philistines of T.S. Eliot's prophecy, whose world of kitchen certitudes can only ever end with a whimper of submission. And, after what seems like centuries in the evolution of my spleen, it is indeed a surprise that I still have the requisite bile to jeer their indecorous life and inglorious fate.

Andrei Navrozov is Chronicles' *European correspondent.*

Letter From Texas

by Wayne Allensworth

Mighty Seer, in Days of Old

◆

It's near the end of October, and the air is crisp and cool. The wind blows hard here on the prairie, the thermometer failing to reflect the chill you feel on your skin and in your bones. A smattering of pinks, reds, and oranges coat the white-cored, cottony fingers floating against the pale-blue morning sky. We are off to church early this Reformation Sunday morning, for the children are to sing in the choir and must rehearse their song before the congregation has gathered.

On our way, my youngest daughter watches the banks of Bear Creek, looking in vain for the turtles she has often seen sunning themselves by the water; but it is early yet, and too cool for them. The longhorns aren't out this morning, either. I tell the children they must be in the trees near the pasture's back fenceline.

The leaves are turning now, the yellows and occasional reds showing themselves after having teased us for some time, hinting of the changes to come with almost imperceptible splotches of color. They will fall quickly, as they always do here—here and gone and back again.

And so we renew our faith, following the cycle of the Church calendar. The service we will follow today is one written by Martin Luther himself, the great reformer employing the talents of Conrad Rupsch and Johann Walther to help him set chants to music, to write a hymn paraphrasing the Nicene Creed, and to tell the message of justification by faith alone in glorious song. In one deeply moving hymn written about 1542, he prayed for the protection of Christendom from the Turks:

> Lord, Keep us steadfast in Thy Word;
> Curb those who fain by craft and sword
> Would wrest the Kingdom from Thy Son
> And set at naught all He hath done.

It is the first of Luther's hymns the children learned in the church's grammar school, where each day is begun with song and prayer. Its petitions for strength of faith and divine protection seem more appropriate than ever as the postmodern West, no friend to hopes for a renewed Christendom, is confronted by the "Turks" in a new and terrible form:

> Lord Jesus Christ, Thy pow'r make known,
> For Thou art Lord of Lords alone
> Defend Thy Christendom that we
> May evermore sing praise to Thee.

It may be that a faith tested in the crucible of conflict, of sudden death and certain sorrow, will be one that can thrive again. And so we sing:

> O Comforter of priceless worth,
> Send peace and unity on earth.
> Support us in our final strife
> And lead us out of death to life.

The Sanctus, composed in 1526 for Luther's German Mass, is based on passages from Isaiah, chapter 6:

> In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.
>
> Above it stood the seraphims . . . And one cried unto another, and said Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.
>
> And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

During the distribution of the Lord's Supper, the congregation sings "O Lord, We Praise Thee," a hymn set to an old German folk tune. The pastor blesses our son, who is surprisingly solemn as he kneels before the altar, his five-year-old eyes shifting from the altar to the communicants to the smoky light that penetrates the stained glass above us. I ask God to bolster our spirits for the trials to come, then I take the Host and drink from the chalice.

The church bulletin recalls that the young Luther was troubled by the question of his salvation. Born in 1483, Luther died in 1546. We sing his "Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above," each verse elaborating upon the petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

Soli Deo Gloria.

Driving home, I find myself humming hymns written nearly half a millennium ago in a place I have never seen, sung first by people now long gone.

A lonely longhorn raises his majestic head to watch as we go by, his mighty rack framing the town water tower on the rocky hill above him, the hill itself stripped clean to make way for a residential subdivision. The longhorn shakes his head, turns, and wanders slowly back toward the brush. We'll see him again, I trust.

The Allensworth family attends Messiah Lutheran Church in Keller, Texas.

LIBERAL ARTS

"U.S. BOMB KILLED DAUGHTER, BUT DAD GLAD TALIBAN IS GONE"

"'I told her the Americans weren't bombing ordinary people like us, they were only hitting the Taliban military positions,' recalled Abdul Basir, 34. 'I told her there was not reason to be afraid.'

"'We are thankful because America helped us get back our freedom and whatever happened to our family, it was war, and in war these things happen.'"

—*from the* Chicago Tribune *(December 19, 2001)*

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by Srdja Trifkovic

Time for Arafat to Go

It is not necessarily a bad thing for a national leader to remain at the helm for a very long time, provided that he is successful. Otto von Bismarck's 28 years as Prussia's and then the Reich's chief minister were marked by unification and consolidation internally, nifty diplomacy and overall stability of the European balance-of-power structure externally. His behavior was beneficial from the standpoint of Germany's national interest; at the same time, remarkably enough, it helped to prevent that fatal polarization of European alliances into two rigid blocs that occurred under his lesser successors.

Even among second-tier powers, the long political careers of Francisco Franco, Ismet Unenu, or Chiang Kai-Shek—love them or hate them—testify to the ability of talented statesmen to retain the nose for best solutions for decades on end, even within a severely limited range of options and amidst rapidly changing circumstances.

The problem with Yasser Arafat, the Palestinian leader, is not that he has been around for too long but that he is no good—and probably never was. To his own long-suffering people, he is not delivering optimal returns. This, while regrettable, is irrelevant. What matters from the standpoint of the American interest is Mr. Arafat's failure to contribute to a new, and long overdue, Middle Eastern architecture that could bring peace and stability to the region.

For the better part of the past decade, Yasser Arafat has played what he assumed was a clever game. One day he was president of the Palestinian Authority, bringing dissidents to heel and indulging his vanity with kitschy head-of-state decorum. The next, he was chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, seeking to turn up the heat on Israel and appease the radicals. By the mid-1990's, as the popularity of Arafat's corrupt and undemocratic rule began to wane and the prominence of Hamas and other Islamic radical organizations grew, Arafat sought to bolster himself by taking a harder stand on Jerusalem, particularly on the Temple Mount.

For seven years after the Oslo Accords of 1993, Arafat could get away with it, not because of his intricate skill but because of the weaknesses of the Oslo peace process: It deliberately left the most difficult issues—Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders—on the table until near the end, in the mistaken belief that this would make them easier to resolve. Other key actors—the United States and Israel—considered Arafat the devil they knew, who, when forced to make a choice, would play along.

Then came Arafat's greatest blunder, when he rejected the deal Bill Clinton presented at Camp David in the closing months of his inglorious presidency. Clinton was desperate to score a foreign-policy triumph that would atone for his many domestic scandals, and the peace deal—while far from perfect—accurately reflected the limits of Israeli flexibility at that time. The American proposal offered Palestinian sovereignty over Arab sectors of Jerusalem, sweeping administrative powers elsewhere, and "formal custodial status" on the sacred Temple Mount, the symbolic core of a conflict that is at once territorial, national, and sectarian. All this, on top of a recognized Palestinian state and billions of dollars of aid, would have given Arafat a position that seems virtually unattainable today. Even Palestinians conceded in off-the-record talks with their American hosts that no Israeli leader had ever gone so far toward meeting their demands. Whether bravely or (as his chief political rival Ariel Sharon alleged) recklessly, Ehud Barak had pushed the limits of the possible—gambling that he could reverse his political fortunes at home by bringing back a comprehensive peace deal and then winning a convincing endorsement of it in a popular referendum.

What Clinton offered and Barak accepted did give Arafat grounds for loudly proclaiming victory and going home in triumph. Rather than negotiate, however, he stood on his opening position. Arafat failed to seize the day, paving the way for Barak's defeat, Sharon's victory, and the *intifada*.

In that new equation, Arafat ended up with the worst of both worlds. Until only a few months ago, he could observe with some satisfaction the steady shift in world opinion, prompted by Sharon's heavy-handed tactics against the stone-throwing Palestinian teenagers, and the tacit acceptance on both sides of the Atlantic that no enduring solution was possible without meaningful Palestinian statehood. Even after September 11, the Bush administration acted prudently in resisting the Amen Corner's demands to extend the war against terrorism to Israel's many enemies throughout the Middle East and in restraining Sharon's initial attempts to use Osama bin Laden as a smokescreen behind which he could deal with the Palestinians as he deemed fit.

In the closing months of 2001, however, Arafat's two-hat approach backfired badly. A putative head of state should be able to halt violence, the world told him. In December, the European Union joined the United States in saying that Arafat must dismantle the "terrorist networks" of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, arrest and prosecute all suspects named by Israel, and appeal—in Arabic—for an end to the armed *intifada*. They also called upon Israel to end the assassinations and freeze settlement-building in the occupied territories, but everybody knew that the onus was on Arafat to act first.

Many young Palestinians—armed, dangerous, and radicalized by the uprising—no longer accept Arafat's leadership. They now control Tanzim, Fatah's own field organization, and militias within it, such as the al-Aqsa Brigades. They are willing to cooperate with Muslim fundamentalists from Hamas and Islamic Jihad who openly defy Arafat and whose popularity increases with each of his half-hearted attempts to curtail their attacks on Israeli targets. They all agree that the *intifada* will end only with the independence of Palestine, but this entails the destruction of Israel. They see the Palestin-

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ian Authority as part of the problem, not the solution.

Sharon's policy of hitting Palestinian policemen in retaliation for Islamic suicide bombings has undermined the position of moderates within the Palestinian Authority leadership, led by Arafat's security chiefs, Muhammad Dahlan and Jibril Rajoub. The latter maintain that the preservation of the authority is in the interest of the Palestinian people, even if the price for its survival means eating humble pie by ending the *intifada* and resuming security cooperation with Sharon's government. They are ready to impose order by force, if only Israel would give them some breathing space. They may not be able to do so, but they are willing to try.

Israel is shortsighted to breed long-term Palestinian radicalism for the sake of short-term diplomatic and security gains, but it may be unrealistic to expect more from Ariel Sharon. When he declared in December that "Yasser Arafat is no longer relevant to the state of Israel" and that he would seek alternative Palestinian interlocutors, he was being disingenuous. Sharon likes Arafat just as he is: as powerless to stop terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians by groups outside his control as he is unable to resist Israeli retaliation against the Palestinian Authority's security forces. Those "alternative interlocutors" who are potentially more accommodating than Arafat are the real losers. The radicals do not want to talk to Israel; they want to destroy it.

Yasser Arafat is an old dog that cannot learn new tricks. He will try to have it both ways yet again, and he will lose. The dilemma—whether he is unwilling to control terrorists (as Sharon accuses him), or unable to do so (as his apologists contend)—is false: He could no longer stop the violence even if he wanted to, and whether he really wants to is uncertain. The resulting loss of credibility is detrimental to peace, but it is disastrous to the Palestinian cause. A credible leader could assert that it is absurd that the Palestinians are now being urged to renounce the internationally recognized right of resistance to an illegal occupation in return for the opportunity to negotiate with Ariel Sharon. A credible leader could point out that, if anyone had suggested to the leaders and people of occupied Kuwait that they should renounce resistance and negotiate with Saddam Hussein, such a suggestion would have been branded as absurd and immoral. Arafat cannot convincingly advance such notions because the world no longer takes him seriously. He is the Palestinians' Slobodan Milosevic: Otherwise perfectly valid arguments sound false when they come from his lips.

When the two sides resume their path toward a permanent agreement—and they will, eventually—the Bush administration may invoke the memory of Camp David, with the sobering wisdom of an opportunity that was missed by all. But it would be wrong for the United States to act forcefully before the time is ripe to facilitate rather than moderate. This demands patience in the face of a distinctly unpleasant *status quo*. For now, each side is hoping to inflict enough pain on the other over a sustained period that the opponent will eventually lose heart and surrender what it never would have in negotiations.

In the short term, Israel will be the winner, with a discredited Arafat on one side and more sympathetic world opinion on the other. But in the long run, time is clearly on the side of Arafat's eventual successors. To put it crudely, an end to Israeli occupation is an infinitely more likely result of the spiral of violence than the Palestinians' acquiescence in the occupation. On the other hand, the Arabs would be well advised to remember that Israel will not hesitate to use some or all of its two-dozen nuclear devices.

Courage, skill and imagination are needed to find a quicker, safer, and less painful way to attain the Palestinians' objectives. Such can only be provided by Arafat's eventual successors, and only if they do not come from the ranks of the radicalized Islamic youths. There is no time to lose: The death of senior Palestinian official Faisal Husseini in June 2001 strengthened the impression that the old guard is fading from the scene. Arafat is now a frail figure in his early 70's, and the question of his successor is linked with the state of the Palestinian relationship with Israel. That the young radicals may kill him if he does not devise a mechanism for transferring his authority to a person or body of his own choice goes almost without saying. Still, like the rulers of all other Arab countries, Arafat is essentially a dictator who is determined to remain in power for life.

Such determination often reflects insecurity and lack of options rather than single-minded zeal to cling on to power well into one's dotage. If the U.S. government would offer Yasser Arafat a safe retirement home somewhere in southern Florida, together with a Secret Service detail and a six-figure annuity for life, this investment would yield the loudest bang for the buck in 54 years of America's unhappy involvement in the Middle East. It might not be enough to kick-start a new peace process, but it would be a very useful first step.

c

Thief

by William Baer

It started out like every other day,
busy, of course, but everything seemed all right:
your usual mix of plans/and work/and play,
with tickets for the theater later tonight.
But as you're walking down Jersey Street (I think),
a trucker swerves and smacks you pretty bad.
Or was it a bus? Or a car? Or too much drink?
Or the fatal disease you didn't even know you had?
You fall to the street, still conscious, with little pain;
soaked in your pool of blood, you struggle to breath.
Just two short minutes and thirteen seconds remain,
before I arrive, before the blackness of death.
And when I do, you see my silhouette
and scream: "No, no, no. I'm not ready yet."

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POLITICS

Non-Partisanship

by Sean Scallon

"Here in North Dakota, people vote Republican for president or for local offices because they're seen as the white party," North Dakota State University political science professor David Danbom told me. "But they'll vote for the Democrats for Congress and some local offices to look after their economic interests in Washington or here at home."

North Dakota is as good a place as any to see these cultural and political forces in action. But it is also a place where people on the outside of the elite economic and political structures of the state once used the two-party duopoly to build an independent political force that swept the Upper Midwest from 1915 to 1925. It was not a new party, like the Progressives of Wisconsin or the Farmer-Labor Party of Minnesota, but an organization that used the Republican and Democratic nominations to advance its own agenda: the Non-Partisan League (NPL).

I am not offering a paean to the League's socialist policies or its legacy within North Dakota, which includes a state bank that contributes $40-50 million to state coffers each fiscal year and a state grain elevator and mill that, like so many socialist enterprises, struggles every year and is constantly asking the state for more money. A brief overview of the League's history, however, may help conservatives, patriots, libertarians, and even the occasional Green understand that third-party politics are often infantile and that the best way to promote policies and candidates favoring their own views may be to build independent political organizations based on cultural and economic factions that can use familiar party labels to advance their own policies and candidates.

Throughout the decade of the 1910's, the Socialist Party tried to organize farmers across North Dakota. Since farmers got virtually nothing for the wheat they worked hard to produce, many sympathized with the NPL's ideas, which included state control of banks, railroads, mills, and elevators. Low prices on Minneapolis grain markets, low payments from Minneapolis millers such as Pillsbury and General Mills, and high shipping rates from railroads squeezed North Dakota farmers in a tight vise. The state banks—also controlled by Minneapolis financial interests—foreclosed on farms all over the state in 1915 and 1916, and the failure of the legislature to act upon a successful ballot initiative in favor of a state grain-terminal facility fueled farmers' frustration and anger.

The Socialists could never warm themselves by this prairie fire. They had little support outside of Fargo and a bad reputation for atheism, rabble-rousing, internecine warfare over party doctrine and theory, labor unrest, and violence. In *Northern Lights*, an independent film that won a critics' award at the Cannes Film Festival in 1979, Ray Sorenson, a Norwegian farmer who is organizing for the NPL in the northwest part of the state near the Canadian border, tells a grocery-store owner in Crosby, who happens to be a Socialist, that "I've never seen a successful Socialist." In many ways, the Libertarians of the late 20th century are similar to the Socialists of the early 20th century. Many are sympathetic to their ideas, but no one wants to identify with the Libertarian Party.

Socialist organizer A.C. Townley recognized this problem first. A former flax farmer, he was frustrated by Socialist infighting, the party's failure to strike a chord in the rural parts of the states that were suffering the most, and its inability to court more moderate voters. He focussed his efforts on building a cultural and economic coalition of small farmers and businessmen from hamlets across the state. Rather than engage in party politics, this new group simply called itself the Non-Partisan League.

In 1915, the year of the League's founding, North Dakota switched to an open primary. Since the Democratic Party was a nonentity, the NPL ran candidates under the GOP label. NPL candidates, however, did not *join* the GOP or become a part of the party structure.

The NPL was a political force for nearly half a century. In 1916, it swept its way into office, taking control of the North Dakota House of Representatives and electing Lynn Fraizer governor. By 1918, it completely controlled the government of North Dakota.

The deep distrust that most farmers had of cities played a role in the development of the NPL. Cities such as Fargo—and especially Minneapolis and St. Paul—were where those who ripped them off, when it came to the price of their grain, lived. And those were the places where the evil bankers cut off the credit they needed and made them pay high interest rates to try to force them off their land. To build its political base, all the NPL had to do was to tap into rural anger.

"To the small farmer, the Twin Cities was the Evil Empire," Lloyd Omdahl, a former NPL state tax commissioner, lieutenant governor, and political-science professor from the University of North Dakota told me. "They felt exploited by the granaries there, along with banks, which had chains all throughout the state, and the railroads, which charged them high shipping rates to take their grain to market. The further west you went in North Dakota, the stronger the League was."

That dichotomy is still present in North Dakota—even within Fargo itself. Like many Midwestern cities (or many American cities, for that matter), Fargo is

John Kézdy

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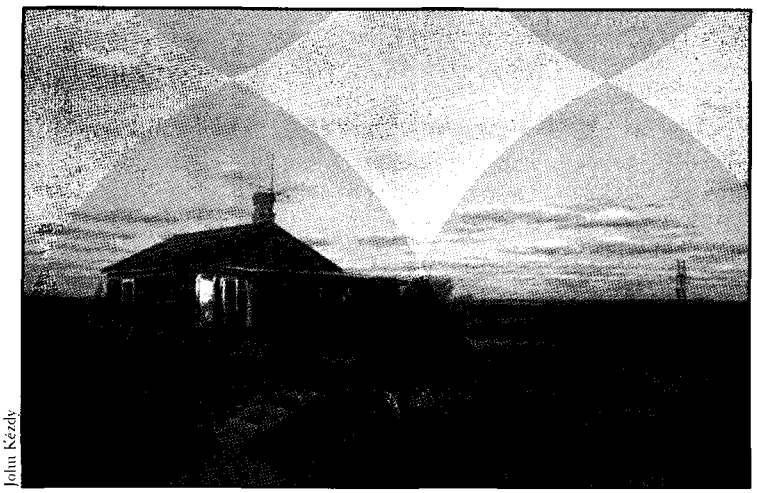

John Kézdy

made up of two parts. One is the old town of well-kept homes and downtown streets built along or near the constantly flooding Red River. The other is where you find the tract homes, duplexes and multiplexes, and the strip malls and shopping malls that cluster near the two interstate highways running along the western fringe of town. This is the new Fargo, built on the edge of the prairie, and it is filling up with refugees who come looking for work and wind up in the service industry. Some in this pool of cheap labor hope to save enough to own a farm of their own one day—when they're retired, of course.

Alas, the League became a part of the powers-that-be between 1918 and 1920. Perhaps it became too powerful. All it took was six dollars to become a member; by 1918, there were over 40,000 NPL members in North Dakota. The League also got into banking and publishing and became a distributor of consumer goods to general stores all over the state. Townley organized NPLs all across the Upper Midwest and managed to increase the membership to 188,365 dues-paying members. Charles Lindbergh's father was an NPL member in Minnesota who ran in Republican primaries, and Montana's Sen. Burton K. Wheeler also used an NPL organization to get himself elected.

With all these interests, it soon became obvious that the NPL was turning into what it was set up to oppose: a corporation. Splits began to appear in the leadership between Townley and a faction led by Fraizer and North Dakota Attorney General William "Wild Bill" Langer. The severe recession after World War I and the depression in crop prices forced the League-inspired Bank of North Dakota to foreclose on the very farmers it was supposed to serve. The war and the Red Scare that followed also caused splits, with charges and countercharges of anti-patriotism, communism, pro-Germanism, and disloyalty filling the air. The League lost power in the 1920 Republican sweep and withered in the rest of the Midwest.

But the NPL still held sway in North Dakota, even as the major parties became irrelevant during the Roaring 1920's. Elections were decided along pro- and anti-NPL lines. (The Independent Voters Association, organized by citizens who opposed the League, became the NPL's competition in 1920.) Thanks to the Great Depression and Langer's efforts to restructure it culturally, the League revived in the 1930's. Norwegians had been the core of the League back in the 1910's. From the 1930's to the 1960's, they were still the backbone of the NPL, along with the *Volksdeutsch*. The latter, while officially listed as Russian immigrants on the U.S. Census, were really German farmers who, at the invitation of Czar Alexander II, settled in southern Russia, particularly along the Volga River, the Black Sea, and in the Ukraine. They arrived in North Dakota in the late 1890's after a series of severe famines and droughts. Langer, a descendant of a Volga German family, spoke fluent German. The *Volksdeutsch* appreciated his antiwar stand back in 1917 and his cultural conservatism; their descendants hold similar views today. If you want to know where Pat Buchanan did his best during the 2000 election, check out the towns of southern North Dakota where the *Volksdeutschen* wrought-iron cemetery crosses rise up among the prairie grasses.

These disparate elements from the corners of old Europe—Norwegians, Volga Germans, and Slavs from the Ukraine and Russia—came together in the 1932 election when Langer was elected governor, Gerald P. Nye was elected to the U.S. Senate, and William Lemke was elected a member of the U.S. House of Representatives. These three were the NPL's top vote-getters in the 1930's and 40's, and they made their mark on the national scene. Nye became famous when he coined the term "merchants of death" while investigating the munitions industry. Langer eventually moved on to the U.S. Senate in 1940 and served for 20 years, and Lemke was the presidential nominee of the Union Party, the most vocal anti-New Deal party in the 1936 election. The NPL joined in coalition with Fr. Charles Coughlin, Gerald L.K. Smith, the remnants of Huey Long's "Every Man a King" organization, and Francis Townsend. Unencumbered by party machinations, these men could fight the powers-that-be on a national level, just as they had in North Dakota.

Unfortunately, they did not remain independent for long. The NPL, like so much that was unique in America, was destroyed by FDR's New Deal. Before 1932, Democrats in North Dakota and the rest of the Upper Midwest were not part of the political culture, except in Irish quarters or big cities. To the countryside, the Democratic Party was the party of Catholics, of the big cities, of the political machines and crooked bosses and gangsters. But the New Deal farm programs and subsidies wedded many farmers to the new party of Big Government. Young NPL members, backed by the liberal Farmers' Union, wanted to steer the NPL into the donkey's stable. They did not want to remain independent, as the NPL had with the GOP; they preferred integration.

At the same time, Republicans, led by U.S. Sen. Milton Young (who defeated Nye in 1944), were working overtime to eliminate the influence of the League within the party. Old-time NPL members like Langer were caught in the middle and declined in importance. Quentin Burdick, son of NPL Congressman Usher Burdick, was elected to the House as an NPL Democrat in 1958. When Langer died in 1960, Burdick grabbed his seat, and the NPL slowly faded into oblivion. Local Democrats in North Dakota still use the NPL label, just as Minnesota Dems retain the old Farmer-Labor tag, but such labels are simply curiosities now.

Could the NPL be revived today? In some ways, as Professor Danbom points out, it already has been. Throughout the 1990's, the Christian Coalition elected like-minded candidates in Republican primaries and precinct caucuses through grassroots organization and financial support. Like the NPL, it ultimately failed because it tried to control the entire par-

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ty, rather than stay independent of it. The NRA and the pro-life movement are non-party groups that fund and assist candidates sympathetic to their views, but they are limited to single issues.

One figure who represents the kind of leader a new NPL could produce is Texas Congressman Ron Paul, the Libertarian Party presidential nominee in 1988. Recognizing the futility of trying to win office with the Libertarian millstone around his neck, he ran as a Republican to win his seat. He has never strayed from his beliefs, however, nor does he feel the need to do so out of party loyalty. Almost alone among congressmen, Ron Paul is asking questions about the way we are conducting our "War on Terrorism." He is protesting the erosion of our civil liberties and the growth of leviathan. Few (if any) Republicans are following his lead, and certainly none of the Democrats are.

Recent elections show how a renewed Non-Partisan League could help like-minded candidates. In the 1998 Illinois governor's race, the Democratic candidate, Glenn Poshard, was clearly more conservative than his GOP opponent, George Ryan. Yet the Republicans used the national Democratic Party's platform positions on such issues as taxes, gun control, and abortion to tar Poshard as a liberal. A new NPL could have given Poshard its seal of approval and made him attractive enough to conservatives to gain crossover votes.

Lloyd Omdahl thinks a new NPL could work in the civic-minded states of the Upper Midwest. But he also warns of the difficulties of facing the powers-that-be, since, in his words, politics is "a rich person's game." That may be true now, but it was also true back in 1915, when many poor people first joined the NPL and successfully put their stamp upon North Dakota. If a new Non-Partisan League could identify a potential cultural and economic base among MARs (Middle American Radicals), stay-at-home moms, libertarians, WASPs and European ethnics, orthodox Christians, and those who work with their hands, it might put the powers-that-be on the run again.

Sean Scallon is a reporter from East Ellsworth, Wisconsin.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Speak No Evil

by Dave Kopel, Paul Gallant, and Joanne Eisen

On January 11, 2001, 40-year-old Terence Hunter was arrested by the New York Police Department for writing a letter to Staten Island borough president Guy Molinari, criticizing him for closing a community center in a black neighborhood. According to the *New York Times*, Hunter, a Staten Island resident, was charged with "aggravated harassment" because he called the center's closing a "high-tech lynching" and his letter to Molinari included photographs of blacks being lynched. Hunter was released the next day when the Staten Island district attorney's office announced it was refusing to prosecute the case. Molinari admitted that, although he found Hunter's letter offensive, there was no threat involved.

An entirely different fate befell 69-year-old Englishman Robert Birchall in May 2000. Birchall was convicted of "the public offense of using racially threatening or abusive words" and fined £100. The magistrate told Birchall that the fine would have been much higher if he had had a "substantial income." Birchall, a retired academic, had allegedly told Mungai Mbaya (a British citizen born in Kenya) to "go back to your country" during a dispute in the Cambridge Central Library. It seems that Mbaya had two newspapers in his possession at one time—contrary to an unwritten library rule—and Birchall had been looking for a copy of one of them.

Birchall, while admitting he was angry at the time, denied using the objectionable phrase, lamenting, "It's political correctness gone mad. I'm not a racist and I wasn't being racist. I was brought up with people from mixed races and have been around them all my life." No matter. Birchall was convicted of violating race-discrimination laws recently enacted in Great Britain.

As the contrasting Staten Island and Cambridge cases illustrate, the United States has not yet followed Great Britain's lead in turning offensive speech into a crime. In the United States, saying "go back to your country" would probably result in trouble for a university professor or for an employee of most corporations, but it wouldn't even come close to a criminal offense.

The greatest threat to free speech and civil liberty in Europe may not, however, be national governments infected with extreme political correctness, but the European Union. On March 6, 2001, the European Court of Justice provided the British people with a vision of things to come, when it rendered a ruling in *Connolly* v. *Commission* that, in essence, resurrected the legal monstrosity of seditious libel.

Mr. Connolly had been an E.U. staff official, working on monetary policy. During a three-month unpaid leave from his position, he published a book entitled *The Rotten Heart of Europe: The Dirty War for Europe's Money*.

After Connolly had initially returned to his E.U. post, the book was serialized in the *Times* of London, and Connolly gave interviews as part of the publicity campaign for the book, during which he remarked that

> My central thesis is that the ERM [Exchange Rate Mechanism] and EMU [European Monetary Union] are not only inefficient but also undemocratic: a danger not only to our wealth but to our freedoms and ultimately, our peace. The villains of the story—some more culpable than others—are bureaucrats and self-aggrandizing politicians. The ERM is a mechanism for subordinating the economic welfare, democratic rights and national freedom of citizens of the European countries to the will of political and bureaucratic elites whose power-lust, cynicism and delusions underlie the actions of the vast majority of those who now strive to create a European superstate. The ERM has been their chosen instrument, and they have used it cleverly.

In retaliation, Connolly was fired from his E.U. job and his pension was taken away for violating regulations governing E.U. employee conduct, which forbid employees to publish material without permission.

The unanimous four-judge court acknowledged that Connolly had free-expression rights and that the European Union's rule that permission be obtained

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before employees publish anything had to be interpreted in light of freedom of expression. But the right of freedom of expression, the court asserted, may only be exercised in a manner consistent with "the protection of the rights of others." Connolly's book had interfered with the "rights" of the European Union itself, the court explained, because the book "damaged the institution's image and reputation."

It is important to note what is *not* in the European Court of Justice's opinion. American courts have allowed some limits on job-related political speech by government employees. But in the United States, the restrictions must be content-neutral. For example, the FBI may forbid employees to write books that disclose FBI secrets, but the FBI may not grant or withhold publication permission depending on whether the employee applauds or criticizes the FBI. The *Connolly* decision, in contrast, was justified on the very grounds that Connolly's content made the European Union look bad. The E.U. court did not attempt to show that Connolly's book was false or misleading. That Connolly had written a truthful exposé of misconduct at the European Union was seen by the court as making his offense all the worse.

Although the *Connolly* case involved enforcement of an employment regulation against an E.U. employee, nothing in the opinion limits the court's rationale to this narrow context. Freedom of expression, the opinion argues, may be stifled if necessary for "the protection of the rights of others." And the "rights of others" include the "right" of the European Union to prevent damage to its own "image and reputation." The principle would certainly sustain a national government's law forbidding criticism of the European Union. Indeed, since the European Court of Justice can override national laws in order to enforce E.U. laws, the *Connolly* principle could conceivably be used to invalidate a nation's constitutional protection of free speech—at least where criticism of the European Union or other governments is involved.

In short, *Connolly* takes a major step toward reinstating the offense of seditious libel—that is, the crime of criticizing the government so as to injure its reputation. Historically, the truth of the statement was no defense against the charge of seditious libel. Indeed, truthfulness harmed the government all the more. As Lord Holt put it in the 1704 English case *Rex* v. *Tuchin*: "nothing can be worse to any government than to endeavor to produce animosities as to the management of it . . . no government can be safe unless it is punished."

Before *Connolly*, seditious libel had been purged from the Anglo-American legal tradition. In England, an important step in this direction was Fox's Libel Act of 1792, which allowed juries to render general verdicts of acquittal in seditious libel prosecutions. The European Union, though, recognizes no right to a jury trial. Cases are decided by professional government employees, not by one's peers.

In the American colonies, there were 70 prosecutions and 50 convictions for seditious libel from 1760 to 1776. As Leonard Levy details in *Origins of the Bill of Rights*, it does not appear that the First Amendment was intended to outlaw falsehoods that injured the government's reputation. Thus, seditious libel prosecutions were still allowed in the case of false statements. The famous 1735 jury acquittal of New York printer John Peter Zenger had proved that, at least in some cases, American juries could and would acquit based on the truthfulness of the publication in question—even if the juries had to violate the judge's instructions.

The 1798 Sedition Act, passed by a Federalist Congress, specifically allowed truth as a defense. But the Sedition Act was vigorously used to persecute Republicans, which led the Republicans to adopt a more liberal standard. They argued that the truth of political matters was often subject to honest dispute and that the courts were given too much leeway in determining whether a publication fell within the Sedition Act's prohibition of "false, scandalous, and malicious" writings.

On January 7, 1800, James Madison delivered his Report on the Alien and Sedition Acts—a detailed argument in favor of the Virginia and Kentucky Resolutions, which had interposed the state governments of Kentucky and Virginia to protect their citizens from the unconstitutional acts of the federal government. Madison argued that the narrow view of the First Amendment (Blackstone's position in his *Commentaries* that freedom of the press consisted only in freedom from prior restraint) was meaningless if a person could be punished after publication. The specter of potential punishment would make writers afraid and, thus, have the same effect as prior restraint: preventing the publication from being made in the first place.

More fundamentally, Madison explained, "The people, not the government, possess the absolute sovereignty"—unlike in England. The very nature of deciding whether Congress and the president deserved to be reelected required deciding whether elected officials deserved to be held in "contempt or disrepute" or deserved "the hatred of the people of the United States"—yet the Sedition Act forbade creating such sentiments.

As a practical matter, if the Sedition Acts had been in effect before the American Revolution, "might not the United States have been languishing at this day, under the infirmities of a sickly confederation? Might they not possibly be miserable colonies, groaning under a foreign yoke?"

Thomas Jefferson's landslide victory in the "Revolution of 1800" ratified this view, and the hated Sedition Act was allowed to expire ignominiously. The new Republican view of freedom of speech dominated interpretations of the First Amendment. At the state level, seditious libel prosecutions began to vanish as well. Seditious libel also began to wither in England, although more gradually than in America.

The end of seditious libel did not completely end the prosecution of people for criticizing the government—especially in the misnamed "Progressive" Era and during World War I. Even then, however, prosecutors had to argue that the defendant's speech would lead to lawbreaking, either immediately or in a more attenuated fashion. Merely harming the government's image was no longer an offense.

The European Union touts itself as a progressive government. But as the *Connolly* case illustrates, its vision of "progress" is the elimination of traditional individual rights that might interfere with the lust for power of bureaucratic elites.

Dave Kopel is the research director, and Paul Gallant and Joanne Eisen are research associates, at the Independence Institute (www.i2i.org).

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by George McCartney

Transcendence, Anyone?

Of the many films I've seen recently, including the inoffensive but terminally mild *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, only two require extended comment: Ethan and Joel Coen's *The Man Who Wasn't There* and the re-release of Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

The first deals with a barber leading a life of quiet—no, *silent*—desperation in the grimly black-and-white city of Santa Rosa, California, in 1949. The second is an alternately sublime and satiric imagining of the course of human evolution from apes to astronauts. Despite their obvious differences, these films are thematically united: Both focus on human beings turned robotic by social forces they barely comprehend. And, in both films, this state of stunned conformity becomes a prelude to an almost unseemly hunger for transcendence.

The Man Who Wasn't There is a clever, provocative homage to James M. Cain. Character names—Nirdlinger and Diedrickson—have been lifted from *Double Indemnity*, both the novel and its film adaptation. As in *The Postman Always Rings Twice*, there are two murders leading to two trials in which a smart-aleck defense attorney cynically parades his contempt for truth. There's just one difference: Cain's protagonists are scheming lowlifes ruthlessly intent on taking their pleasure and profit at the expense of inconvenient husbands. The Coens have entered this story from the other side. Their protagonist is Ed Crane (Billy Bob Thornton in an extraordinarily downbeat performance), the husband who tells himself he doesn't mind being two-timed by his wife and her loutish lover, Big Dave (James Gandolfini). He just wants to escape his fate in general.

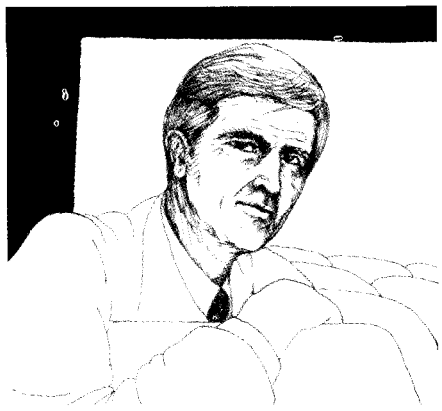
This story begins in a barbershop in Santa Rosa, not incidentally the setting of Alfred Hitchcock's *Shadow of a Doubt*. We're on notice. Lurking under the apparently untroubled surface of this corner of small-town America, even the most rabid audience will find enough betrayal, treachery, greed, and homicidal fury to satisfy their bloodlust. Behind the opening credits, we watch a barber pole spinning, its red, white, and blue stripes mockingly rendered in shades of black and gray, as if to forecast the heartless betrayal of true-blue promise. The camera then dips to show us Ed, solemnly cutting hair as a cigarette dangles from his tightly set lips. In voice-over narration, he explains his situation in his entirely uninflected voice. "I work in a barber shop, but I never consider myself a barber." He has spent his last 15 years toiling in his brother-in-law Frank's shop, resigned to his fate.

Ed wants out, but he has no clue how to make his exit. Then, an escape hatch opens for him in the form of a fat, greasy apparition improbably calling itself Creighton Tolliver (Jon Polito), who bursts into his shop after closing time to demand a trim. But who will trim whom? Tolliver needs $10,000 to open a chain of dry-cleaning establishments. Although Tolliver wears a hopelessly obvious toupee, speaks in ridiculous clichés, and even makes a bugeyed pass at Ed, the wan barber unhesitatingly accepts his proposition as the real deal. To raise the money, the cuckold blackmails Dave with an anonymous note threatening to expose his dalliance.

Just as you would expect, Ed's single act of self-assertion triggers an irreversible train of events at once harrowing and hilarious. In no time at all, his placid existence is transformed, and his frozen soul, thawed.

If you are familiar with Cain's sardonic universe, you will have a pretty good idea where all of this is heading, although nothing is a predictable as it first seems. Clearly, the Coens know that Albert Camus got his inspiration for *The Stranger* from Cain's *Postman*, and they have not been able to resist the implications. Accordingly, they've made Ed an existential everyman, a more tepid version of Camus' Meursault, a man whose estrangement from his world may go unnoticed by others but is nevertheless a matter of continual perplexity to him. He can't help wondering about the tomfoolery of it all. "Did you ever think about hair?" he asks Frank one morning, staring down at the vestigial cowlick in a 12-year-old's crewcut. "How it's a part of us? How it keeps on coming, and we just cut it off and throw it away?" For Frank, the practical business man, the question has never arisen. He looks at his brother-in-law with a mixture of exasperation and alarm. But in the long, quiet shot of Ed's wondering gaze that follows, we're made to feel that there's no inquiry more important. What in God's name are we doing in our daily routines? With each one of us facing his own death sentence, isn't there something absurd about the way we spend our days? To say nothing of how our hair keeps growing, even after death, as Ed wonderingly observes. It's a marvelous moment, at once delightfully droll and painfully on point.

There are many pleasures in this film, including its sumptuous black-and-white cinematography. It's almost tactile. In close-ups of Thornton's deeply lined face, the photography conveys his weariness with life more palpably than technicolor ever could. Or take the scene in which Ed finds himself being throttled by Big Dave, who slams him into a plate-glass window in his office. In any other movie, the glass would explode in a shower of sparkling fragments. Not here. The night-blackened window slowly spiders into dozens of luminously white fis-



The Man Who Wasn't There

Produced by Working Title Films
Directed by Joel Coen
Screenplay by Joel and Ethan Coen
Released by USA Films

2001: A Space Odyssey

Produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer
Directed by Stanley Kubrick
Screenplay by Arthur C. Clarke and Stanley Kubrick
Distributed as a re-release by Warner Bros.

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sures behind Ed's back. Not only is this more realistic, it also serves as a visual metaphor of Ed's entrapment. He's caught in a spreading web of deceit and violence.

Then there's Freddy Riedenschneider, the cynical rat-tat-tat defense attorney modeled on Cain's arrogant mouthpiece in *Postman*. Told the truth that would prove his client's innocence, he airily dismisses it. He prefers, instead, to cook up a defense based on Werner Heisenberg's uncertainty principle—or, as he puts it, snapping his fingers in a vain attempt to remember the physicist's name, a theory "some heinie" came up with. The important thing for Freddie is that the guy proved that "the more you look at something, the less you know. It's a fact; in a way it's the only truth that is." This "truth" certainly applies to the Coens' loving recreation of 1940's film *noir*. After looking at it, you're not quite sure what to make of it. Is it merely deadpan parody or does it walk on its own feet?

Having just seen it, I'm still not sure. Although exquisitely well made, it seems oddly incomplete. Something seems to be missing. Others have called it heart. And, yes, like earlier Coen films, there seems to be an icy self-consciousness about this project, a sense that we're watching very clever film students devising a pastiche of their favorite movies, not so much to entertain as to impress one another.

I wrote much the same regarding the Coens' last film, *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* While entertaining enough in its various episodes, the total effect seemed strangely insubstantial. In preparing to write this review, I decided to take another look at *O Brother* on DVD. I was surprised to find how enjoyable and even moving the film was the second time around. I wouldn't be surprised if *The Man Who Wasn't There* improved upon subsequent viewings. After all, just as with a novel or poem, why should we expect to get everything a well-crafted film has to offer the first time around? Isn't that what DVDs are for?

Of course, *2001: A Space Odyssey* may be the exception to DVD arbitration. You really can't judge this film's merits on television. It requires the resources of a well-equipped theater, ideally one graced by a full-sized screen, not one of those multiplex poster-size affairs. So I am happy to report the re-release of Stanley Kubrick's work for a limited run in selected theaters across the nation. This film remains as astonishing as it was in its initial release 33 years ago.

Kubrick took Arthur C. Clarke's fairly routine science-fiction story about aliens monitoring earthly affairs and transformed its literal-minded narrative into a highly evocative visual poem. Taken as a conventional narrative, it fails miserably. Its characterization is minimal, its conflict diffuse, its climax ambiguously muddled, and its denouement willfully vague. Viewed as a cinematic ode, however, it succeeds spectacularly as a meditation on the human longing for transcendence.

The film begins and ends with the prospect of rebirth. In between, we encounter many ordinary birthdays, all celebrated in a perfunctory manner that suggests how far we have fallen from our original sense of wonder about existence. A NASA scientist calls home from space to talk to his wife and, as an afterthought, wishes his three-year-old happy birthday. An astronaut on his way to Jupiter receives a delayed video transmission from his parents, who sing him birthday wishes as they thrust a candle-bedecked cake toward the camera. He watches with a bored expression, reclining under a sunlamp and wearing shaded glasses. These ceremonies are made to seem merely *pro forma*, but they serve as the ironic foil to some truly startling nativities. The first is the birth of human intelligence among a tribe of primates who wake one morning to discover a 12-foot black monolith outside their cave dwelling. In Clarke's novelization of the screenplay (which he helped Kubrick write), this artifact, along with the others that pop up later on the moon and near Jupiter, is supposed to be the instrument of some superintelligent extraterrestrial beings who have seeded the universe with similar machines. They are designed to locate suitable creatures and promote intelligence in them. In the film, Kubrick provides no such explanation regarding the monoliths' origins and purpose. As such, they are left open to interpretation. Add a little imagination, and they become divine calling cards, moments of grace beckoning us to rise above our earthbound selves and be reborn in renewed wonder and aspiration.

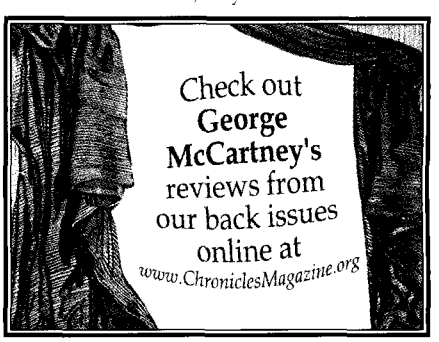
Clearly, Kubrick wanted his film to suggest our civilization's ongoing project to nurture the individual in his search for freedom and meaning in a universe jealous of his secrets. He named his astronaut protagonist David Bowman and subtitled his film *A Space Odyssey* to echo the origins of the West in Greek and Hebraic culture. David comes from the house of David, and Bowman recalls Odysseus, the bowman of Ithaca. David Bowman, then, becomes at once the traditional and advanced guard of Western culture as he pursues the troubling monoliths to Jupiter. As Western man has always done—whether with Mosaic reverence or Promethean arrogance—he is seeking knowledge of the godhead.

What does he find at the end of his journey? Kubrick has been accused of being willfully obscure on this point. In the last phase of his interplanetary quest, Bowman is translated into something resembling an 18th-century suite filled with otherwordly sounds. Here, each time he turns his head, he literally watches himself age from youth to dotage, climaxing in his emergence as a fetus within its embryo.

What does the sequence mean? Seeing it again, this conceit no longer seems so impenetrable. Life is brief. Turn around, and you are 40, then 50. In no time, you're in your 60's, wondering how long your hair will go on sprouting after you're in the grave. And, meanwhile, what have you accomplished? Have you changed anything for the better? Have you achieved enough to justify rebirth?

As I watched *2001* again, I couldn't help thinking of Ed Crane's no-exit existence. The scientists and astronauts we meet in the film's middle episodes move as if they were automatons, their flat voices drained of resonance by the constant hum of electronic machinery. In one scene, an astronaut goes outside his space-born vehicle to inspect a malfunctioning antenna. There, against the infinite reaches of unmapped space, he gropes awkwardly in the confinement of his cumbersome suit, all the while tethered to his ship by a flimsy lifeline. What better image to convey the paradox of man, a creature capable of contemplating the limitless immensity of creation—but only from within the narrowly constricting harness of his physical being?

Transcendence, anyone? C



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by Chilton Williamson, Jr.

Crazy Horse

The horse went down on a horizontal stretch of trail where no sound horse had any business stumbling. The quadrupedal rhythm broke suddenly, his near shoulder crumpled, his head sank at the end of the black-maned neck, until the horse seemed to be wanting to kneel and kiss the ground. I let out rein and sat back in the saddle, expecting him to recover himself and get up on all four feet again. Instead, he kept going down, and down, past the recovery point, until I came off like a sheik descending from a camel, only harder, striking a kneecap on a rock, my shapeless felt hat bowling alongside over the ground, keeping up. From the corner of my eye I observed the horse complete a somersault a few feet away, idly calculating whether he was going to fall on me or not. I heard Norma's shout from behind as the horse scrambled to get his legs under him and onto his feet, retrieved the hat from a bed of mountain lupin, and stood up, rubbing the knee with my free hand. The horse shook himself all over under the loosened saddle, gazed reproachfully over his shoulder as if the wreck had been my fault, then turned to graze a clump of the sparse grass.

"Are you all right?" Norma asked anxiously, sitting the mare who had also begun to graze. "I thought you hit your head when you went off."

"Not my head, my knee." The rock had torn a hole in the faded denim where the black blood oozed. "I'm all right," I told her, going for the gelding. "*He's* history, though. Somebody's been trying to tell me something for years," I added as I reached for the hanging reins. "This afternoon, I finally got the message."

I made it up to the saddle on the third try and started along the trail again, trying not to pressure the throbbing knee. Afternoon clouds gathered above Medicine Bow Peak where fresh snow had been that morning after a night of wind and cold. As the sky darkened toward the September evening, a cold wind sluiced between the angled ridges of the Snowy Range. The gelding stumbled twice more on the ride back to camp without seeming to notice, never watching the trail or his feet but always the dark treeline, the freestanding boulders, the blackened stumps of trees, holding rigid and tense, prepared to shy sideways in the trail. I pulled his head in and maintained equal tension on the reins to point him straight in the trail, until the ground really did become rough and he needed freer rein for balance.

"We've been here before," I said, "but that was sixteen years ago. A five-year-old horse can learn something. This one's forgotten everything he ever knew in the last six months."

"You act as if you're scared of him, after all these years," Norma said.

"I'm not scared. He's just a dangerous horse to be on in this country. If I'd had the packs behind, the bedroll up front, and my gun on my shoulder, I wouldn't have come off back there."

"He could have killed you," she said, helpfully.

"Maybe worse. If we were still married, you could've had another Christopher Reeve on your hands for the rest of my life—or yours."

"I'd have known you needed me, then. I wouldn't have divorced you."

"Let's not go into *that* again. Having the future of a horse to decide is more than enough responsibility for one afternoon."

In camp, I picketed the horses above Arrowhead Lake while Norma brought in wood. We met at the campfire for oysters and whisky, seated side by side on a log before the waving flames while the valley darkened rapidly between the opposed granite walls and a final ribbon of sunlight striped the top of the west-facing cliff a thousand feet above the camp.

"You remember in the Absarokas two years ago, he'd been eyeballing the black timber on his left, then spooked in the same direction and went down on his side with my leg underneath him? A sound horse just doesn't do that. And now, in addition to everything else, he doesn't want to be caught—turns his butt to me, and lifts one of his back feet as if he's offering to kick when I come up on him."

"He's always been a different horse," Norma agreed.

"I should have called him Crazy Horse," I said, "except that Crazy Horse was a great man. Not someone who deserved to have a knothead horse named after him."

We ate supper while bull elk bugled from the surrounding forest and the bowhunters answered them with their tubes. It didn't take an amorous cow to identify the inexpert ones, who sounded like cockerels trying to imitate a rooster's crow. We turned in early and stretched ourselves in the bags on the ground, which felt very hard and cold to my swollen knee. I lay awake thinking about the horse, whether his eyesight could be failing or he'd developed arthritis or some neurological problem that affected his balance, until the solid strike of raindrops on the tent roof changed to the scrape of sleet and I fell asleep hearing the restless horses stamp the ground as they shifted around on their tie ropes to stay dry beneath the sheltering firs across the camp.

In the morning, the little snow that had fallen melted after sunup, and my knee felt better, the swelling diminished and some of the stiffness gone out of it. We built up the fire for breakfast and then struck camp, loaded the packs on the horses, and scattered the fire ring in the small clearing.

"Aren't you going to ride?" Norma asked in surprise as I picked up the reins and started off on foot, leading the gelding.

"Nope."

"I can give you a leg-up to save your knee."

"It isn't my knee that's the problem, it's the damn horse. If it wasn't for getting the packs out, I'd shoot him and leave him right here by the lake."

"You're trying to talk yourself into getting rid of him. Aren't you?"

"I don't have to try and talk myself into anything. I made up my mind this morn-

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ing while I was looking at my knee. He's twenty-one-and-a-half now, too old to be worth the medical bills—assuming a vet can do anything for him in the first place. This horse is worth probably $700, dead meat. As soon as we get home this afternoon, I'm calling the trader in Rock River to come and pick him up."

The horse trader estimated $900 over the phone and asked if I wished him to add the horse to a load he was pulling over to Cheyenne the next morning. I told him yes, then called Dr. Hopper in Laramie, who thought the problem could be eyesight or arthritis and offered me an appointment the next morning. I said I couldn't get over there in the morning and would call again in a day or two when I had some time on my hands. Next, I phoned the trader back and told him we'd have to make it some other time, as I had to leave town suddenly. Finally, I went to a bar downtown and ordered whisky-on-the-rocks with soda—a well-known cure for a sore knee. Once the knee problem was solved, I reckoned the other thing would fall into place after it.

I had bought Saab Star 20 years before from a lady in Kemmerer who had the barber shop I'd dropped into for a haircut. Linda Cronenburg was a willowy blonde in her 30's with a long neck and still longer mane, and I had to wait my turn behind the other men as I picked through the horse magazines laid out on the table. As soon as I was up in the chair, I asked about those magazines: In quarter-horse and Appaloosa country, it was a surprise to find Arab magazines lying around a barber shop. By the time I got down from it, I'd agreed to drive 45 miles to Cokeville the following afternoon to look over the 18-month-old Arab stallion Linda had received as part of her divorce settlement from her ex-husband in Montana. He was a beautiful black bay horse, delicate but strong looking, with a confirmation that already had won him first place in a halter-class showing and a papered lineage—a quarter of which, at least, was champion stock. The asking price was only $1,500; Norma was willing; my two stepdaughters, more than willing. For a year-and-a-half-old stud, it was now or never, and so my first act as Saab Star's owner was to trailer him to the vet clinic in Oakley, where Bill Wilson put him down and cut him while I sat on his head to hold the rag of oriental rug in place across his eyes. (I've thought many times in the two decades since that Bill must have cut him proud, but that's another story.) That winter, I boarded Star on Fred Chambers' homestead on Twin Creek ten miles west of Kemmerer, where Fred and I hauled water daily through the snow until spring came, Fred hauled his trailer home out from town, and had a well drilled. All that winter, I worked with the little horse and, as soon as the snow was gone from the corral, began to groundbreak him, using a longe-line and whip to teach him his voice commands and gaits—without the saddle at first, then under it. It was early September when I swung up on his back for the first time and let him feel my bootheels, very gently, in his flanks. At the crucial instant, a horse may do almost anything . . . or nothing at all. This one, in his startlement, broke to a run—and went down almost at once on his face in the soft sand under the brown hanging jaw of Fred, watching from his spectator's seat on the top pole of the corral as I stepped briskly from the saddle so as not to be under the horse in case he had it in mind to roll next. That a surprised young horse should lose his balance and fall under the weight of his first rider made sense to me at the time; but what had happened under Medicine Bow Peak was 20 years and thousands of trail miles later. My knee felt better already, so I ordered another whisky-and-soda to bring my head along with it.

In the years between, Saab Star proved himself a good horse with a crazy streak he managed to control just in time—usually. In a tight place, his instinct had always been to hit the gas pedal—not, as a calmer horse will do, to slow down and pick his way ahead with care. Many times, this tendency resulted in near-disaster; almost as often, the realization that he was endangering his rider had brought him to his senses within seconds. With horses, the maxim about the devil you know being preferable to the devil you don't has a special relevancy. In 20 years, Star had reared with me exactly once, and he had never bucked beyond the playful buttock-toss called a crowhop. Shying, habitual nervousness, occasional panic, and congenital hotness had been problems; but without these, I would not be nearly so careful and alert a rider as I am today, with honed reflexes and an enhanced sense of balance. Short of experiencing a vicious horse or a deliberate mankiller, with this one I'd been through much of what a regular horsebacker needs to know. For the last few years—even perhaps from the beginning—I'd been registering danger signs, without ever fully acknowledging them. Now, after the incident below Medicine Bow Peak, I had this choice: face up to the problem or eventually—maybe sooner, maybe later—end up dead along the trail, at the bottom of a talus slope, or alive still, pinned beneath a fallen horse with a crushed chest and the saddlehorn in my heart. It had happened to Mary Mead, who ran for governor of Wyoming a dozen years ago. I wondered if *she* had ever considered over a whisky or two before stepping up for the last time to her favorite horse—the problem one that killed her. Once, following a horsepack trip on which Linda had the chance to observe Saab Star at his very worst, she had remarked about how glad she was she that had sold him to me. Anyone else would have sent him to the glue factory years ago, Linda admitted.

I paid the barmaid, putting down a huge tip to cover all her good advice as well as the drinks, and drove out to West Laramie to feed. The horses recognized the truck from three houses away and ran to meet it at the gate, their heads and tails raised, nickering. The gelding's four black hooves, admired by every farrier who ever shoed him, were planted strongly on the ground; his brown eyes looked clear and seeing, their gaze direct. He and the mare gamboled behind as I crossed the paddock to the hay rick and pitched a third of a bale down into the crib. Plenty of hay remained over from last winter: That, in addition to this year's delivery, amounted to more than enough feed to last two horses until June, if need be. Only, what sense did feeding an idle head of stock all winter make? Of all the kinds of sentimentalist there are in the world, horse lovers are perhaps the worst.

On the way back to the truck, I met Wade Marlow going to empty the ash hod over his garden plot. "When's the trader coming to pick up the black horse?" Wade asked. He had on denim coveralls and an old straw hat with a row of assorted songbird feathers stuck in the thin black ribbon around the base of the crown.

"I don't know that yet," I said. "He's in Cheyenne with a load of horses this week, so his wife tells me. We'll see him when we see him, I guess." c

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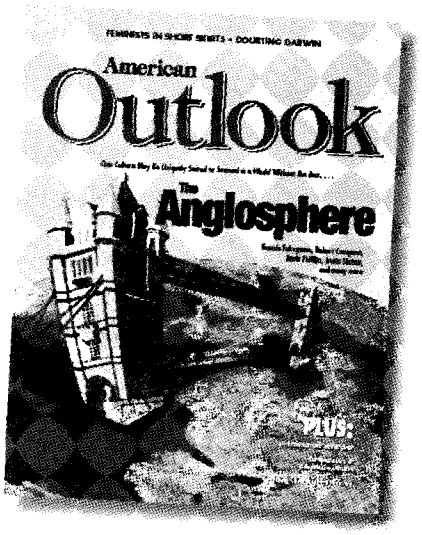

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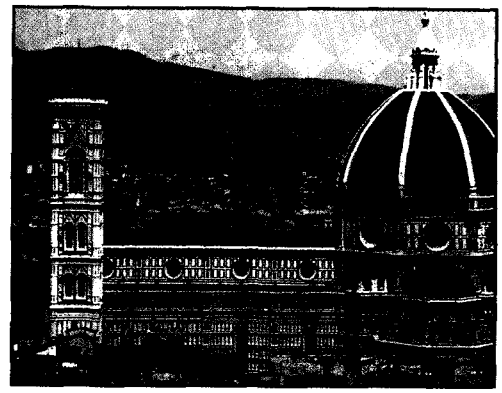
TOSCANA—LAND OF THE REAL MULTICULTURALISTS



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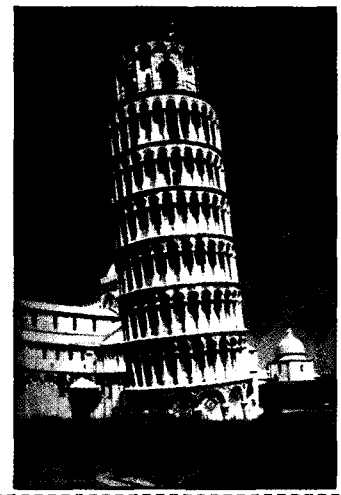

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